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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses public libraries in the United Kingdom (UK) from a social and political point of view and examines race issues outside the UK. Part 1 addresses understanding race and class oppression, including moving away from a Eurocentric approach, features of racism, social and economic exclusion, the language of exclusion/liberation, roots of racism, combating racism in the United States, manifestation of racism in the UK, and racism and the law. Employment of black workers is described in Part 2, including the library field, the role of the Library Association, and the culture of change. Part 3 covers the black community perspective, including community librarianship, empowering local communities, and research projects. Part 4 discusses problems and solutions, including equal opportunity, commitment of managers, the role of Equalities Officers, barriers to change, the need to fight institutionalized racism, and anti-racism. Tools for change are discussed in Part 6, including perspectives on combating racism, recommendations of the Roach and Morrison study, Commission of Racial Equality standards, Lawrence Inquiry recommendations, the government's Social Exclusion agenda, library standards, empowering staff, changes at the British Broadcasting Corporation, the Best Value process, the Quality Leaders Project, and the Local Authorities Race Relations Information Exchange. Part 6 presents the conclusion and recommendations. (Contains 132 references.) (MES)

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Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion
Working Paper No. 13
May 2000

Struggle against racial exclusion in public libraries; A fight for the rights of the people

By

Shiraz Durrani

You have to see
with the eyes of the people
you have to hear
with the ears of the people
you have to speak
with the voice of the people
you have to fight
for the rights of the people

- Walter Rodney

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Racism is one of the most devastating of all the ideological weapons wielded by imperialism today. It is meant to safeguard the entire system of exploitation of the many by the few in one nation and among nations. Racism is a conscious ideology of imperialism.

- Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1993)

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Note: Companion papers

This paper is one of a series of publications exploring racism in the information field in Britain. It should be read in conjunction with the others in the series . The companion papers are listed under the author's name in the References.

> **One day history will have its say, but it will not be the history they teach at the UN, in Washington, Paris or Brussels, but the history they teach in countries freed from colonialism and its puppets. Africa will write its own history, and it will be one of glory and dignity.**
>
> \- Patrice Lumumba (1961)

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INTRODUCTION: A LIBRARY IN EVERY HOME

> **In every home, there will be a library that was once the privilege of the rich. These books will be at the disposition of the poorest classes who, before, had no books or libraries, because we are now going to struggle for the culture of the people.**
>
> \- Fidel Castro (2000)

This year marks the 150th anniversary of the Public Libraries Act. Yet we are nowhere near having a system that provides "libraries for all" after this long period. Indeed we are still debating what this term means. We are not short of resources or ideas that can put a "library and information in every home." Why is it that Cuba can have such a vision which is rapidly being put into practice in spite of limited resources and a 40 year economic blockade, yet Britain "celebrates" 150 years of public library system that has not reached at least 50 per cent of the people whose needs are perhaps more urgent?

The fact that we still need to struggle against an exclusive library and information service at the beginning of the 21st century is indeed a sad one. Over the last 150 years, the world has seen major revolutions in every field. We have come to understand and control the forces of nature through enormous developments in science; human welfare is at a stage where there is a theoretical possibility for the material needs of every human being to be met; our understanding of social forces ruling our lives has enabled major social and economic revolutions to take place. Developments in information and communications technologies have revolutionised the way we organise and use information.

Yet there are major contradictions in every aspect of life. With all the necessary natural and human resources readily available, a large proportion of the world goes hungry; while little or no resources are available to provide safe drinking water to every child in the world, vast fortunes are spent every day in military expenditure. With all the talk of democracy, most people of the world have no control over their lives. A few individuals control resources that total more than the combined wealth of billions of people. A few transnationals have cornered the wealth of the world in order to extract even more wealth for themselves.

The reason for this basic contradiction is seldom mentioned in the information field, yet it affects everything we do. This state of affairs is inevitable under capitalism which is based on private ownership of means of production. Its distribution system has nothing to do with equality: its main interest is in making profits for the few. It creates a divided society: a powerful few and powerless majority. Its relentless globalised march leads to imperialist plunders that replicates its divided society around the globe. It should then not surprise us that a system based on addressing the greed of a few creates millions of people who are "excluded" from even the basic means of survival.

It would indeed be surprising if capitalism did produced an "equal, all-inclusive" society.

After hundreds of years of capitalist development, the people in the "West" have ended up with a divided society with millions who are excluded from the benefits that advanced technologies make possible. The ranks of the "excluded" include working people, Black communities, disabled people, lesbians, bisexuals, gay men and transgendered people as well as other communities whose needs are considered in other Working Papers of this Project.

It is in this context that we need to see the struggle of the Black[1] communities in Britain today. They suffer from racist oppression as well as class exploitation. Thus their struggles are not restricted to library and information fields. What are the forces that stop us, as a society, from tackling racism in LIS services? Why have most white LIS "professionals" not accepted – in theory and practice - that the service they have created and wish to maintain today actively discriminates against Black communities and Black LIS workers? The very facts that Black people have to "prove" that the their needs have not been met, that the voices of Black communities and LIS workers are nowhere to be heard, that their absence from the ranks of policy makers bothers few white policy makers, are proof enough that we have a racist library service. Perhaps it will need a white judge to pronounce the existence of racism before the LIS "establishment" accepts that British library service is a racist one and starts taking action.

It is ironic that it was the resources from the majority world that enabled Britain to enjoy the wealth that enabled services like public libraries to be run. Yet our public libraries today have few resources for services to the British people from the majority world who even now continue to make major contribution to the development of this country.

Perhaps all this will automatically be dismissed by some as of no relevance to the LIS community, that this is a matter of politics which is supposedly miles away from libraries. But the basis of exclusion is lack of power among Black communities and Black LIS workers. This inevitably takes us into the political field.

The changes needed to make libraries relevant to the needs of working classes and Black people cannot come about unless libraries examine their role in the wider social context. It is the lack of direction and commitment at a national level that prevented developments in the past. With the new emphasis that the Government is placing on "social exclusion," there is a real possibility for change. A new set of tools is now available to ensure meaningful change.

Yet there are many barriers, both within the profession and within the wider society, which prevent the leap to a new service. If the difficulties are to be overcome, there needs to be a joint approach between Black communities, all positive people in libraries and in Council departments as well as other professions to push for change. There should also be a joint approach by all those excluded from libraries to create a service that looks after the needs of all those currently excluded.

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[1] An explanation of the use of the term "Black" as used in this article is given on p.12.

There is an urgent need for a change in thinking on the part of those who hold power in libraries and local authorities. The first step is to admit that all is not well in the library world. As Sir Herman Ouseley said, "To tackle an illness, one must first accept one is ill." (Marks, 1998). A new vision of an all-inclusive, non-racist library service is urgently needed.

This paper looks at the library scene from a wide social and political point of view. It also takes a brief look at race issues outside the UK, as the experiences and ways of combating racism in other fields and other countries have valuable lessons for us. Too often issues in the library are seen in isolation from their social and political context. Too often libraries operate in an environment sealed from new creative ideas and developments in other fields and countries. This narrow outlook then prevents us from looking for broader solutions which others are trying out. We thus lose the benefits of finding real solutions in a co-operative way. This paper deliberately places emphasis in looking at racism in the wider British society as well as looking at experiences in other countries. The debate in the LIS sector desperately needs to be informed by examples of combating racism in its wider national and international context. Its resolution in LIS will not be achieved in isolation, but will be informed by solutions tried out in the wider society which are again influenced by successes or failures in other countries.

Concerns within the library field are taken up in the author's other papers mentioned in the Note and in the References. The Recommendations flow from issues raised in this paper and in its companion papers as well as from discussions at various conferences.

Racism is an integral part of our culture – of the sense of Britishness, so that to threaten racism is to threaten the stability of the unjust order of which it is a central part.

- Kenneth Leech, Anglican theologian. Quoted in *Goan Overseas Digest 8(2)2000*

PART 1: UNDERSTANDING RACE AND CLASS OPPRESSION

Anti-racism is about breaking hierarchies, traditional methods of working, of relating to people, of becoming more broad based in representation and concerns. The challenge of racism is a challenge to democracy.

- *Race & Class.*

Six per cent of British population is black, that is 2.2 million people of working age. This comparative small proportion of population faces racism which has become one of the greatest social and economic issue of our time. Racism is so much a part of life in Europe today that it is often seen as something inevitable, something based on "scientific fact". Yet modern science has shown that the biological category of "race" is meaningless when applied to human species. "Biologically, the human species shares a common gene pool, and there is much more genetic variation within each so-called racial group than between them" (TUC, 1996).

It is at economic, social and political level that racism has had profound effects on lives of millions of people. Belonging to an oppressed race has often been used as justification for inequalities in the distribution of power, resources, advantages and benefits.

Hall (2000) captures the reality of racism in Britain today and sees the connection between racial oppression and economic exploitation:

> The practices of racialised exclusion, racially compounded disadvantage, household poverty, unemployment and educational under-achievement persist, indeed, multiply.

TUC (1996) draws distinction between "personal racism" and "institutional racism." TUC (1998) mentions "direct and indirect discrimination". All these aspects need to be addressed in libraries. John (1995) points to the ever-present existence of racism in our society:

> We live in a society with an overarching culture of racism that is all pervasive. Culture underpins and underlines racialisation of oppression, immigration, crime and also of resistance to oppression itself. It is not possible to appreciate other oppressions (e.g. of women) without understanding this.

John (1999) pinpointed a particular problem of racism that exists in LIS as well: "There is too little recognition of the fact that this society validates white people automatically while constantly expecting black people to be proving ourselves." The manifestation of such validations can be seen at every work place in LIS.

Moving the Centre

Ngugi (1993) sees "moving the centre to correct the imbalances of the last four hundred years" as a crucial step to win the struggle for liberation. It is worth examining Ngugi's thoughts as they provide a dynamic analysis of problems of oppression and their possible solutions.

"I am concerned," says Ngugi, "in moving the centre in two senses at least":

> One is the need to move the centre from its assumed location in the West to a multiplicity in all the cultures of the world. The assumed location of the centre of the universe in the West is what goes by the term Eurocentrism, an assumption which developed with the domination of the world by a handful of Western nations... The Eurocentric basis of looking at the world is present in all areas (including) economic, political and... cultural studies.

A serious look at public library policy and practice reveals a Eurocentric approach, with the achievements and indeed the very existence of other cultures and practices merely given a nod in tokenistic projects. When the pressure to "move the centre" becomes too strong, cosmetic changes are made to release pressure for fundamental change. Such was the case, for example, when the name of a Library in Hackney was changed to C.L.R. James Library, but the essence of its work remained the same as before. The Eurocentric forces have got even more strong with the end of the USSR which had provided a (less powerful, perhaps) second centre.

Ngugi then looks at the second level at which the centre needs to move:

> Within nearly all nations today the centre is located in the dominant social stratum, a male bourgeois minority. But since many of the male bourgeois minorities in the world are still dominated by the West we are talking about the domination of the world, including the West, by a Eurocentric bourgeois, male and racial minority. Hence the need to move the centre from all minority class establishments within nations to the real creative centres among the working people in conditions of gender, racial and religious equality...Moving the centre in the two senses – between nations and within nations – will contribute to the freeing of world cultures from the restrictive walls of nationalism, class, race and gender.

Ngugi thus provides a basis for understanding issues of race, class and other forms of oppression, at international as well as at national levels. If the information field is to liberate itself, there is an urgent need to move the centre form the restrictive walls built by what Black (2000) calls "the strength of the middle-class pressure exerted on the public library over 150 years". It is also interesting to note that Ngugi has already moved the centre as far as the concept of majority/minority and language-use are concerned: the white "majority" of the West becomes "a Eurocentric bourgeois, male and racial minority" and the so-called black "minorities" have become the majority in a truly world-wide perspective. It never fails to satisfy me, for example, to reflect that while I am a minority Gujarati speaker in Britain, Gujarati in India is spoken by more people than the entire population of Britain. Which "minority" do I belong to in a globalised world?

Five features of racism

Anybody really interested in understanding racism should read Ngugi (1993), particularly Chapter 14, *The ideology of racism*. It is necessary to summarise some points from this in order to understand racism for the purpose of this Working Paper. Ngugi lists "five interlinked features" of racism:

- Obscurantism: Racism obscures the real relationship between the wealth of the few and the poverty of the many within a capitalist nation; and, internationally, between the wealth of Western nations and the poverty of the majority of nations in Asia, Africa and South America.
- Divide and rule: racism obscures not only the real relationship between capital and labour, but also the relations that bind capital to capital and more importantly the links of labour to labour under the sway of the same financial and industrial conglomerates, nationally and internationally. The aim is to make labour see itself in national, racial, religious, or tribal enclaves.
- Political domination: racism, by dividing the working people or diverting their attention from the real causes of their misery, necessarily weakens their struggle and results in the domination of the majority by a social minority.
- Exploitation: The first three features are not an end in themselves. The end is more profit. The end result is the appropriation and control of the wealth produced by labour. Capital bleeds labour on both national and international scales. The ideology and practice of racism facilitates that exploitation.
- Oppression: Racism, though an ideology, is not felt as a mental or spiritual abstraction. It is felt in the flesh, in the very practice of daily living... Institutional racism permeating many educational, social, and political structures of the West has ended up affecting the general consciousness in society.

Social and economic exclusion

> **There are entrenched and historical inequalities in respect of a large section of population who are disadvantaged. This has to be addressed first.**
>
> \- Gus John, 1995.

Black people are "disproportionately deprived" in Britain. *Social Exclusion Unit* (2000) finds that they are more likely than the rest of the population to live in poor areas, be unemployed, have low incomes, live in poor housing, have poor health and be victims of crime". It then looks at reasons why black people are excluded:

- Direct and indirect racial discrimination
- An inadequate recognition and understanding of the complexities of ethnic minority groups, and hence services that fail to fit their circumstances; and
- Language, cultural and religious differences.

Social exclusion, of which racism is an important aspect, is an essential part of capitalism where social exclusion, social oppression and economic exploitation are the basis of organised life. The prevailing free market system ensures that economic activity satisfies the profit motives of the few, leaving the material, educational and cultural needs of the majority of people unfulfilled. In this context, the issues of racial oppression and class exploitation are intertwined and cannot be considered in isolation. This also implies that racism is not a problem for black people alone.

This essential connection between race and class should be kept in mind in any attempts to combat racism. This was emphasised in comments on the DCMS Guidance, *Libraries for All* (1999):

> The social context in which English (and British) libraries exist is largely ignored in the Policy Guidance. The distribution of wealth and power in society as a whole influence the way public institutions such as libraries operate. The context of a society where private ownership of property and production for profit allow some to have excessive wealth, power and influence at the expense of the rest of the community needs to be taken into account. It is this reality which leads to a large number of people being excluded from social wealth and power. Libraries cannot be seen in isolation from social forces all around them, nor can solutions be found if this reality is not understood. (Durrani, 1999c).

Kundnani (2000) refers to a "redefinition of equality" under New Labour:

> Equality as it used to be understood by Labour is now regarded as an outdated concept from before the Thatcher 'revolution'. It failed to recognise the importance of 'individual freedom' and 'economic pluralism'. What we have instead is equality of opportunity, with social mobility replacing redistribution. Instead of seeing the market as a system which structurally produces and depends on inequality, the neoliberal view of the market as a rational and efficient system of rewards has been accepted wholesale…social exclusion no longer simply means a lack of access to material resources. It is now defined so that it refers to cultural attitudes as much as exclusion *per se*. Hence it can be combated by a change in perceptions… If Britain is a prejudiced country, it is not a matter of 'institutional' or 'structured' inequalities, it is a matter of cultural baggage tied to personal hang-ups.

If the cause of inequality is incorrectly diagnosed in term of its manifestations rather than its root causes, the solutions will obviously be similarly incorrect.

Language of exclusion...language of liberation

Liberation from any form of oppression implies a struggle at a cultural level. It requires those who struggle for liberation to first of all liberate their thinking from that imposed on them by the forces that seek to exclude them.

Thus the struggles that black people need to engage in include the cultural front, at the level of language. The English language itself, as well as meaning of English words commonly used and understood in the British society today often alienate black people. For example, the term "asylum seeker", when applied to people from the majority world, has begun to have an automatic context of "bogus" added to it by actions of some media and politicians. White refugees from Zimbabwe are welcomed as citizens of Britain, South Asian British citizens from East Africa become "economic and political migrants." It is not only the *form* of such communications (i.e. the language) that is racist; it is the *content* itself that is racist. Such distortion of language to serve a racist agenda is an indication of the existence of racism in Britain today.

It is for this reason that an essential aspect of resistance to racism is an assertion of the right of majority world languages to exist, as well as the creation of language and terms that serve the needs of black communities struggling against racism. Thus the language of liberation is engaged in a fierce battle with the language of oppression. Young black people have evolved their own language to oppose the imposed meanings of the "Queen's" English. Internationally, the "English" language of BBC is opposed by the "english" language of the people of majority world who have had to use the language of the former colonial power as a medium of communication.

The struggle at the level of language should be understood correctly as it reflects the struggle for liberation from racial exclusion. It is in this context that the terms and language we use should be understood. Such an understanding should then inform our policies and practices. In order to understand better the on-going debate about racism, it is important to be clear about the terms we use. Language can often play a divisive role if words and terms mean different things to different people. Use of terms and phrases should help us to understand social reality, not obscure facts and lead to confused thinking. We next examine a few terms in common use today to see their marginalising context which helps to further exclude people of colour and the working classes.

Social and economic exclusion

"Social inclusion/exclusion" shows only a partial picture and is likely to lead the thinking of policy-makers and those excluded to a partial solution of the real problem. A better term would be *social and economic exclusion* as it takes on board not only the social *effects* of exclusion, but also the economic *causes* of exclusion. With this clarity of the problem and its effects, it will be easier to find appropriate resolutions to the problems. It also gives dignity to the excluded individuals and communities who are then seen not as being responsible for their exclusion, but as victims of economic and social forces in an increasingly globalised world created by transnationals as a means of increasing their profits.

Black

The term *Black* is used in this article in its political sense to include all people from Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean and all those who consider themselves black. It includes those born in Britain but whose parents or grandparents came from Africa, Asia or the Caribbean. It is meant to highlight aspects that unite people on the basis of their common history of oppression. The term often used in the USA is "People of Color". The TUC, Unison and many other progressive organisations have "Black" sections today. The term '*ethnic minority*' is used less today because of its association with marginality.

Black people today face many forces that seek to divide them as a united, fighting force. Such forces seek to divide African and Caribbean people, to divide these again from people from South and East Asia. There is no denying that each of these communities have their own particular culture, language, lifestyle and economic background. Yet they all face a common, oppressive reality of racism. It is this that gives them a common identity as oppressed and exploited peoples. The debate about what name to use is not over yet and an appropriate term will evolve in the course of the struggle for equality. It is the people themselves who will ultimately decide what to call themselves.

Personal racism

"Clearly seen in name-calling, abuse, harassment and violence." (TUC, 1996).

Institutional racism

- Refers to customs and routine practices which have the effect, though not necessarily the intention, of excluding and disadvantaging people on the basis of their culture, ethnicity or appearance. (TUC, 1996)
- Institutions using power to exclude groups of people of different races from access to resources and power, and blame those excluded for their predicament (Malik,1998:118).
- "Internalised prejudice affecting the way officers carried out their duties" - David Wilmot, Chief Constable, Greater Manchester.
- "Deliberately discriminatory policies and procedures" - Sir Paul Condon, Metropolitan Police Commissioner.
- Professor Simon Holdaway, Sheffield University, talks of an occupational culture characterised by widely embedded prejudices - such as the negative stereotypes blamed for the disproportionate numbers of black people stopped and searched.
- "Organisational structures, policies, processes and practices which result in the ethnic minorities being treated unfairly and less equally." "To tackle an illness, one must first accept one is ill." - letter to the Lawrence inquiry team, Sir Herman Ouseley, former Chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality. (Marks, 1998).

- "The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people." Sir William Macpherson (Stephen Lawrence murder inquiry report, 1999). (Travis,1999).

Institutional racism, as defined by Macpherson, has come to be recognised as the major problem in British society today. However, there is a danger that it can be used to absolve an individual from responsibility for acting in a racist manner by merely blaming the "institutional" aspect of racism. Similar excuses can also be advanced for any crimes by claims that there were "institutional" factors creating conditions which made the crime "inevitable". We do not let thieves go free just because institutional factors such as poverty created conditions for the crime by not providing the means of satisfying their hunger. Similarly, the existence of "institutional racism" should not be allowed to be used as an excuse for escaping from personal responsibility for racist action.

Hall (2000) similarly talks of the critics of the Macpherson Report:

> Critics of the Report don't like it ("institutional racism") because, they say, its emphasis on 'unwitting' and 'unconscious' racism lets racists in general, and police in particular, off the hook. They want a more moralised definition, which forces racists to take responsibility for their actions. It is also said to be so general that it leaves things where they are: if every institution is racist, then there is nothing to do but destroy them and start again – a recipe for inaction.

Yet Hall finds the official use of the term "institutional racism" a "real advance in a long campaign which is unlikely to have many short term or any total victories."

Nationalities, tribes and tribesmen

The terms used to describe people are themselves loaded with value judgements and racism. For example, activists in Yemen are "tribesmen", but were "freedom fighters" in Afghanistan when they supported Western economic and political interests. Australian Aborigines and Native Americans are always "tribes", but no tribes exist in white ethnic communities anywhere. The Majority World people often become "tribesmen" in Western interpretation when their anti-imperialist actions need to be dismissed as primitive activity, such as activists of the Mau Mau movement in Kenya. Reese and Hawkins (1999) talk about the use of the term "tribes" for Native Americans:

> Most Native American people people prefer to be recognized as belonging to a particular nation of people rather than a tribe…others believe the words ("tribe", "tribal society") suggest primitive or nomadic people – classification most modern populations find offensive. A

> nation, on the other hand, is defined as having political organizations and its own administrative structure. (p.41).

Nationality language

The term used to describe people's languages is an important indication of the attitude of the society towards the people of different nationalities. "Heritage language" is acceptable (as if English itself is not a "heritage" language), but "nationality language" is often resisted because there is more than a hint of resistance and equality with English language in the term.

The Public

The "public" is not a homogenous entity. It is made up of different groups and communities with different needs and interests. In spite of progress made in recent times in recognising diversity, it is still common for the public to be thought of as white, usually men, but increasingly women, petty bourgeoisie – with so called 'minority interests' treated as being of marginal concern to the 'public'. It is important to dispel the myth that striving for equality of opportunity is about taking on board marginal, minority concerns.

The voice of the disadvantaged continues to be largely unheard. In the absence of overt policies to address disadvantage, the cloak of public opinion can be all too easily used to further disadvantage those who are already excluded. (LGIU, 1998,p.4).

Roots of racism: race, class and imperialism's global reach

The trade union movement understands clearly that both black and white workers suffer the effects of racism. TUC (1989, p. 3) emphasises that racism and its solution are issues not only for black people:

> Racism affects all workers, and we must all oppose it. Black workers suffer in several ways - from unfair treatment at work to verbal abuse, and physical attacks... It is still possible to hear comments that "Racism isn't our problem ... there are no blacks around here..." At best, this ignores the deep roots that prejudice has laid in British culture. Often it is an excuse for turning away from real problems of discrimination.

This position is reinforced by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and the Government's response to it. *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Home Secretary's Action Plan* (1999) asserts:

> The "colour blind" approach, favoured by local authorities whose populations are mainly white, is no longer acceptable as it ignores racism and will not deliver an anti-racist society in which racial and cultural diversity is embraced.

However the effects of racism on white community are perceived, there is no doubt that the effects of racism on black working people has been devastating. While it is "less and less fashionable these days to consider too explicitly the kinds of costs that slavery and colonialism exacted" (Williams, P., 1997, 1, p.9), the effects on the colonised and enslaved nations and black people cannot be ignored. TUC (1989, p.6) looks for roots of racism in political and economic factors: "The background to racial discrimination lies in Britain's colonial past and willingness of governments and employers to see black workers as a source of cheap labour." The TUC publication points out an important fact about racism which is often ignored - that racism is not merely a matter of a struggle between people of different colour. The crucial factor is power - "power to dominate, to exploit, and to abuse". It is the use of power by the white-controlled Western society against black people that is the basis of racism. TUC (1989, p.12) explains the process of how racism has become embedded and institutionalised in the British society:

> Western society is a white-controlled society which has been built on the exploitation of the rest of the world. This exploitation at first was economic - extracting precious metals, slaves, commodities and foodstuffs from Africa, South America, and Asia. But it quickly led to ideas about the superiority of European people over others, as a way of justifying the behaviour of European traders and colonisers. These ideas appeared in literature, religion, and popular entertainment, and they became established in the way subjects like history and geography were taught in schools and colleges…So you don't have to be an "oppressor" or "exploiter" to be affected by racist ideas - they have become rooted in Western society.

Thus the roots of British racism lie deep in the development of capitalism and imperialism. The issues of race and class are deeply inter-twined in this complex economic and social system. Economic development in the West depended on the exploitation of the working classes – in the colonies, the neo-colonies as well in Britain itself. This institutionalised system of exploitation depended on the labour of the black working class which had to prop up the whole system.

> Britain has always imported labour to meet the needs of growing industrialisation, whether from Ireland, the Caribbean or Asia. This imported labour has always entered the class structure at the bottom, allowing the native English male working class a certain minimal mobility or 'privilege'. (Kundnani, 2000, p. 14).

In the new "globalised" super-profit world of the last quarter of the 20th century, the role of the working class everywhere has changed, causing white working class to lose some of the "privileges" it had clung on to at the expense of the working peoples from the majority world as well as from the black British work force. Kundnani (2000, p.15) explains how the race conflict was fuelled by the changing economic forces:

> With the shift to a post-industrial economy, the large numbers of workers who used to be employed on factory floors, in the docks and in the mines are no longer needed and large tracts of the English working class have found themselves as unwanted as the blacks who worked below them. All are now having to compete (still, however, on

> an uneven racial playing field) in the struggle to find work in the uncertain world of the service economy. Furthermore, those workers who still hold jobs in manufacturing industries find that they are in direct competition with workers in Asia... Meanwhile, the middle classes have found that the status and security which accrued to their 'jobs for life' has been run down. The earlier privileges that existed for all English classes, first under imperialism and, later, through racial discrimination in the domestic labour market, have been reduced, if not eliminated.

This shift in balance of economic power then creates an underground level of racism and gives rise to racist attacks on black people from right-wing racist gangs. It is thus important to understand that racism is not inevitable or a "natural" way of organising a society. It is sustained to serve a particular economic and social agenda, and can be eliminated if there is a will to do so. But this will not be an easy task. As the British Prime Minister Tony Blair acknowledged, Britain "has a mountain to climb before we have a decent modern, multicultural society we can all be proud of". (*The Independent,* March 1, 1999). It remains doubtful if there is even an agreement on the need to climb the mountain.

The white race

Any mention of "race" is often automatically seen to imply that race means black races and communities. This leads to a one-sided understanding of reality and to an inappropriate method of resolving the "race problem". As Williams, P. (1997, No.1) says, "the notion of whiteness as a 'race' is almost never implicated":

> One of the more difficult legacies of slavery and of colonialism is the degree to which racism's tenacious hold is manifested not merely in the divided demographics of neighbourhood or education or class but also in the process...called "exnomination" of whiteness as racial identity. Whiteness is unnamed, suppressed, beyond the realm of race. Exnomination permits whites to entertain the notion that race lives "over there" on the other side of the tracks, in black bodies and inner city neighbourhoods, in a dark netherworld where whites are not involved... What made me so angry and wordless in this encounter was the realisation that none of the little white children who taught me to see my blackness as a mark probably ever learned to see themselves as white.

Race riots and the Scarman Report

Hall (2000) traces the history of racism from the early race riots of Nottingham and Notting Hill in 1958, to various racially motivated murders and to police indifference to date. "Each of those events was followed by campaigns, inquiries, recriminations from authorities, and promises of reform. Yet very little seems to have changed" he concludes.

The Scarman inquiry was set up in 1981 following "some of the most serious riots in mainland Britain this century" (Hall,2000). Lord Scarman's report into relations between black communities and the police in the early 1980s was "one of the first official documents to address the issue head on. Though it acknowledged that racism may stem from inertia as well as assertion, his report denied that British society was institutionally racist or that 'the direction and policies' of the police service were racist." (Naidoo,1999).

The 'temporary collapse of law and order' in Brixton, south London on April 10-12, 1981, caused widespread injury and the destruction of large numbers of vehicles and buildings." (Bowling, 1999). The resistance of black communities in other parts of Britain following the events in Brixton included demands that library services provide for the needs of black communities. This was the case, for example, in Hackney:

> The history of C.L.R. James Library itself is interesting. In common with Black people's struggles nationally in early 1980s, the people of Hackney took to the streets for various grievances, including the need to provide a Library Service that reflected the needs of Black and Ethnic minorities of Hackney. In response to this demand, the Council decided in 1985 to change the name of one of its Libraries, Dalston Library, to C.L.R. James Library as a commitment that the Library service will in future respond to the needs of these communities. Cyril Lionel Robert James has come to symbolise the struggle of Black people throughout the world for their basic rights...But as is usual in such cases, the Library's name change remained a mere cosmetic change. It was considered sufficient for Black people that an empty shell be provided for them, without any meaningful content, for a dry bone to be thrown at them.(Durrani, 1993).

Hall sees the Scarman Report as distinctive for three reasons:

1. It broke the prevailing law and order consensus by firmly locating the sources of unrest in 'insecure social and economic conditions and an impoverished physical environment'.
2. Scarman put his trust in a much-expanded programme of police training on community and race issues as a way of trying to get to grips with the racialisation of routine police work.
3. The statutory establishment of community consultative committees.

One reason why the Scarman Report did not have the desired effect was because "the wider social and economic reforms were seriously out of key with the political temper of the times and triggered no significant response" (Hall, 2000). "In retrospect," Hall continues, "Scarman was to bewail the 'lack of implementation of the social and economic recommendations' and to acknowledge that he should have been 'more outspoken about the necessity of affirmative action to overcome racial disadvantage.'"

The lessons of this failure have still not been learnt. The overall social and economic conditions are the same for the majority of black communities – "still immured in poor inner-city housing with few amenities and severely-limited employment opportunities" (Hall, 2000). One possible solution - affirmative action - is not available in Britain with the opposition to it coming from those have benefited from lack of such action. Meanwhile Macpherson Report remains silent on any affirmative action. Whether it is ethical to let those with privileges to make policies on equality is not even a subject of debate in Britain today.

Combating racism in the USA

Racism is not unique to the UK situation. It exists in Europe as well as in Africa, Asia, and America. It is often used as a tool by the ruling classes to divide people and to take attention away from the facts of everyday poverty and exploitation of the working people. For example, it was used against South Asian communities in Uganda by Amin; South Asian Kenyans get attacked regularly by politicians seeking quick popularity.

If racism is common around the world, resistance to it is also found in all countries. While the oppressed communities have continued to struggle against it, many governments have also tried various methods to eliminate racism. In their search for "equality", many countries have tried different methods, including "constitutional guarantees, protective legislation, affirmative action and multicultural programmes" (Brown, 2000). Yet, "glaring inequalities remain". Brown (2000) examines the experiences in USA, South Africa, India and Australia. Below we look only at USA:

Brown says that the USA was "built on contradiction". He quotes President Bill Clinton who said in 1997:

> We were born with a Declaration of Independence which asserted that we are all created equal and a Constitution that enshrined slavery...We advanced across the continent in the name of freedom, yet in doing so we pushed Native Americans off their land, often crushing their livelihood.

USA has tried affirmative action legislation in the 1960s to compensate for the "racial disadvantages that were a legacy of slavery, segregation and discrimination." This allowed a minority applicant for a job or college place to be selected over an identically qualified white candidate. While affirmative action has often been criticised and recently outlawed in some states, it has brought about major improvements. Brown (2000) says that "twenty-five years of affirmative action policies in public and private sectors have achieved levels of diversity in boardrooms, universities and political institutions that were unthinkable a generation ago." Yet the playing field is still "far from level". The creation of a substantial black middle class has been accompanied by the growth of massive poverty among black communities. "Average black incomes still lag behind those of whites; poverty and unemployment levels for African-American and Hispanic people are significantly higher than for whites."

In order to deal with continuing inequality and poverty among minorities, President Clinton, in 1997, launched a "national effort to deal openly and honestly with our racial differences and to address policies that will close the opportunity gaps that exist for minorities". In the following year, Clinton established a "race council – the first free-standing White House office with a remit to educate the public about race, identify policies to increase equal opportunities, and co-ordinate work on race between the White House and federal agencies." New Labour has borrowed many practices from the USA. Perhaps the formation of a "Race Council" should be its next priority.

At the same time, the young people of colour in USA are changing the way in which race is perceived and allowed to influence every area of social life. They are thus creating a new world where people of colour are no longer at the periphery of society, but in the centre. In *The Color of Our Future* Farai Chideya "reveals how America's young people are deconstructing the white/black definition of race and constructing a new pluralistic paradigm that encompasses the country's white, black, Hispanic, Asian, and native peoples. Chideya shows us the trials and triumphs of several young adults who dare to brave the new multicultural world." Chideya says "We do not obey the laws of race. We make them. Now is the time for us to chose wisely what we will preserve about our racial and cultural history, and what destructive divisions we need to leave behind."

Libraries in the USA

Racism in society gets reflected in all its institutions, including libraries. Racism plays a big role in US politics, as it does in US libraries. The following section is based on some recent publications: Neely and Abif (1996), Tucker (1998), and Reese and Hawkins (1999).

"Racism is still alive in American libraries" says a contributor in Neely and Abif (1996) which records the experiences of 26 "new generation of minority librarians". E. L. Josey sums up the experience in the Preface, "Racism is still alive and well in America and in American libraries" and highlights the fact that there has been little improvements over the years:

> It is difficult for this young generation of librarians, hastening towards the twenty-first century to visualise the life of professionals who are well educated, and having been well endowed with the master's of library science (M.L.S.) degree and several are studying for a doctorate degree, to contemplate that they are experiencing some of the same problems and difficulties that minority professionals have confronted for the last fifty years.

The experiences of some of the 26 (black) librarians provides parallel black experiences in Britain:

- "A strong resilient spirit helped me to combat the racial slurs and disparaging comments I experienced during my first weeks at Texas A&M" - Dexter R. Evans.
- "...the issue of race was always an underlying issue...the theme of tokenism has always been an issue at my institution... a black, an Asian, or a Latino could always be found on staff, but rarely more than one of each" - Mee-Len Hom.

- "Two years after completing my master's, I am still a library technician" - Zora J. Sampson.
- "..it was obvious that racism played a key role in the office politics that surrounded me on a daily basis" - Joni M. Flowers.

Coleman(2000) refers to effects of racism in the academic field in the USA:

> Racism is the single greatest threat to the advancement of People of Color (POC) within the field of academic librarianship. It exists everywhere and comes in many forms—some subtle, racial misconceptions or ethnic comments taken out of context—and some not so subtle, racial slurs or physical attacks. Racism can also negatively affect an individual's opportunities to gain tenure and promotion, obtain staff development, and receive positive performance appraisals to name a few

Yet in many ways the situation is better in USA than in Britain. For example, research carried out by the Local Government Management Board (1996) points to various successful initiatives in the USA to attract and retain talented and productive people. These initiatives aim to

- increase cohesiveness and effectiveness in the work force
- establish communication and rapport with minority groups in the marketplace
- promote creativity
- improved problem solving in relation to service needs
- reduce absenteeism, and turnover and recruitment costs

LGMB concludes: "Few British organisations follow this approach and so little has been done here to utilise the contribution of black and other minority ethnic employees, or to break down barriers to progression for black and other minority ethnic staff".

Nor do local authorities follow the example of the UK business-led Race for Opportunity, which aims to promote greater business involvement in racial equality in Britain's economic and community development. Reese and Hawkins (1999) mention a whole range of policies and practices that are being adopted in the USA.

In terms of professional organisation, American Library Association is decades ahead the British Library Association in supporting the needs of black workers and communities. ALA uses its Office for Literacy and Outreach Services to "ensure that the ethnic caucuses of the ALA are supported in their effort to ensure that the issues and concerns of ethnic minority library professionals and ethnic minority populations are properly addressed" (Reese and Hawkins, 1999). The ALA recognises the following caucuses as affiliates:

- ALA Ethnic Caucuses
- Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association

- Black Caucus of the ALA
- National Association to promote Library Services to the Spanish Speaking (people)
- Chinese-American Librarians Association
- American Indian Library Association

People of colour in USA have not been sitting idle waiting for action from "well wishers". They have been proactive in promoting services to their communities and in recruitment, retention and promotion of librarians from their communities. For example, Reese and Hawkins (1999) mention the progress achieved through the "Stop Talking, Start Doing" workshops. They refer to the pioneering work of Camila A. Alire whose Colorado Ethnic Populations Committee produced a document entitled *Walking the Walk: The Colorado Perspective*. This had five areas of emphasis that demonstrates the library service's commitment to change and service improvement:

1. Library personnel training: recruitment, hire, retention of ethnic minority personnel; ethnic minority populations to be treated by library staff members with sensitivity, courtesy, and respect.
2. Library services to meet the information needs of ethnic minorities and to reflect diverse cultural values.
3. Collection development: to contain a wide variety of materials by, about, and in the language of the state's ethnic minority populations.
4. Celebrations: celebrate the heritage and culture of Colorado's ethnic minority populations.
5. Partnership: develop partnerships with community groups to better serve minority populations.

It is interesting to note that the document then did not remain in the files of the library service. Its contents were incorporated in a "Model statement for Public Libraries" with each of the above points being turned into principles which each Library in Colorado was expected to sign up to. In addition, they were expected to use these performance indicators to see if the desired results were achieved. The following are just a few results:

1. By December, 1996, 50 per cent of Colorado public and academic libraries will adopt a policy statement on library service to ethnic minority populations.
2. By December, 1996, 30 percent of public and academic libraries and school media will conduct a needs assessment of their community's ethnic minorities.
3. By December, 1996, 70 percent of libraries that have over 3 percent of a targeted ethnic minority population in their service area will offer programming, materials, and services to attract and serve that targeted ethnic minority populations.
4. By December, 1999, 50 percent of public libraries that have over 3 percent of a targeted ethnic minority population in their service area will have appropriate ethnic minority representation on their boards of trustees.

A number of interesting comments can be made on the above. First, there is not a strict division between public, academic and school libraries as is the case in UK. This enables the service to ethnic minority populations to be seen as a seamless whole and not compartmentalised. The needs of communities are seen as central and the programme of needs assessment, as well as providing services to "targeted ethnic minority population" are areas in which British librarianship have much to learn. Similarly, including "appropriate ethnic minority representation" on boards of trustees is an area which needs to be given serious consideration.

Yet the constraints of a middle-class serving public library service which characterises British libraries are similarly present in the USA. Black (2000) quotes Lowell Martin: "The public library remains a mainstream agency, serving a middle level of user groups, both in terms of financial and educational background. If this is the 'people's university,' less than half of the people are enrolled, and there are few additional applicants".

In spite of its many shortcomings, the situation in USA has some important lessons for Britain. But it is not only the experiences in a capitalist USA that we need to study. Pateman (1999) records achievements in some socialist countries which have some significant experiences that can guide us. Perhaps what is needed in Britain is a more open minded-approach towards the need to learn from other people and countries. The complacency that surrounds the profession today can become a threat and marginalise the profession from the needs of ethnic minority people. Hendry (2000) considers Britain's public library service to have once been the "jewel in the crown of our civilised society". Yet the jewel never worked for black communities or for working classes.

Manifestation of racism in the UK

Racism is so all-pervading in our society that sometimes it is often difficult to see it as anything unusual. John (1999) talks of recognising the importance of how people "define themselves and particularly the way they define themselves as groups with a common identity of group oppression." He continues:

> It is my view that if we are genuinely concerned about social inclusion, we have to understand the myriad of ways in which institutional racism acts as a structural barrier to any form of social inclusion. We must interrogate the practices that are sustained by a culture of institutional racism. (John 1999)

The acceptance by the government that racism exists is an important step in the ultimate resolution of the problem. Tony Blair (1997) has said "...Not one black high court judge; not one black chief constable or permanent secretary; not one black army officer above the rank of colonel. Not one Asian either. Not a record of pride for the British establishment. And not a record of pride for Parliament that there are so few black and Asian MPs." There are 9 black MPs in the House of Commons out of 659. Jack Straw, the

Home Secretary said in February 2000: "There are a large number of institutions, and some private ones, which are institutionally racist – and that includes the Home Office" (Quoted in the Guardian, April 8, 2000,p4).

The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (1999) asserts that institutional racism in the UK is the reason why the public sector has failed to provide an adequate and appropriate service to black people. The evidence of the failure of local government to address racial discrimination, service provision and employment is also supported by the Audit Commission, whose 1997/98 report on local authority performance indicators revealed that there are areas of local government employment practice and service provision which remain untouched by any equal opportunities programme. This apparent inaction is despite the fact that local authorities have a specific duty under the Race Relations Act of 1976 to have regard to the promotion of equality of opportunity in carrying out their functions, and over £1830 million had been provided by the Home Office in the form of Section 11 funding to support this objective.

A brief look at how racism manifests itself in British society today will help to see the situation in LIS in its social context.

Public service & Home Office

A report by the Institute of Employment Studies has revealed black people are not only disproportional represented in lower civil service grades, but also receive lower performance markings. The report blamed the possible racist perceptions of senior civil servants. It revealed endemic racism in the promotion of staff, including the Home Office. "Black civil servants are being held back from promotion because of racism at the highest levels of the Whitehall machine" the report reveals. (Wintour, 2000).

Mike O'Brien, Home Office minister wrote that the "Home Office is institutionally racist". "Our organisation," he continues, "both internally and in the service it delivers, fails to reflect our multi-racial society". (Watt,2000).

Education

Education carries a double responsibility: one to ensure that its processes, appointments, its practices are informed by the need to eliminate racism. At another level, the *content* of education is important in ensuring that those being educated at all levels are not absorbing racism in subtle ways. As Patel (1999) says, "What's happened in education in the last decade is just a kind of liberal multiculturalism. There's been no actual antiracism, just 'recognising diversity' – different religious festivals or food or clothes. That's been the sum of it." Sir Herman Ouseley also felt that an important opportunity was lost when the school curriculum was not changed in response to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report. Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (2000), expresses similar concerns:

> In education policy, the chances to fundamentally tackle institutional racism are being passed over. Why did the government not incorporate a strong commitment to anti-racist education (as recommended by

> Macpherson) in the changes to the National Curriculum announced this summer? Instead, there are vague statements about respecting cultural differences slipped in to the non-mandatory sections of new citizenship studies.

The Children's Society and the Runnymede Trust have called for tough targets to cut exclusion among ethnic minorities. This was as a result of racism in schools which is contributing to a "disproportionate" number of black pupils being expelled or suspended. Black children are six times more likely to be expelled or suspended from school than their white counterparts, according to government figures (Russell, 1999).

Russell (1999) reveals that black pupils also under-perform in exams. In 1996, 45 per cent of white pupils gained five or more good GCSEs, compared with only 23 per cent of black pupils. Mansfield (1999) draws attention to another trend in education which can reinforce racism in education and entrench racism in the next generation:

> The private sector education is growing fast and in the state sector, schools are becoming selective… when they reach secondary school age, one group, mainly white, will go into private education while in the state sector a lot of the black children will end up in the schools with the worst reputations…we've got to start recreating community schools.

The Police

Institutionalised racism in the police force has come to the forefront of national news following the case of Stephen Lawrence and other highly publicised cases of deaths in police custody or lack of action by the police in face of racist attacks against black people. The reaction from the police force itself is interesting, with some forces admitting institutionalised racism, other playing with words to avoid accepting a social reality. In many cases, officers who are perceived to have acted in a racist manner have been allowed to "retire" without having to face trials. Some reactions to the question of racism in the police force are given below:

> Two more police forces (Sussex and West Yorkshire) have owned up to institutional racism and 10 others have accepted they have racist officers in their ranks. Many of the 10 forces that admitted having racist officers said it was an inevitable consequence of recruitment from a society where racism was widespread. (Burrell, 1998).
>
> He (Sir Paul Condon) was prepared to go so far. There was racism, both unconscious and deliberate, in the force; there was discrimination and stereotyping of black people; officers in the street did overreach their discretionary powers of stop and search and arrest. He even reluctantly accepted that such practices were widespread. But he would not acknowledge institutional racism…Racist incidents and crime in London have increased by 42% since 1993. (Pallister, 1998 p. 1)

> Today racism is likely to follow two forms: unintentional but adverse; and disguised but deliberate. The great failure of the Scarman inquiry into the Brixton riots 17 years age was its failure to recognise the institutional dimension. (*Racism in the Met, 1998).*

Trade Unions

Last year, the Transport and General Workers' Union adopted proportionality in its committees and representatives which must now reflect the membership. "There is a growing membership among women and black people" explains its national race officer, Bob Purkiss, "But there are a lot of Paul Condons who don't recognise institutional discrimination." (Campbell, 1998). The Union is discussing three big changes:

- "It wasn't enough to have an equality agenda, we had to get everybody talking about it. It wasn't an add-on, it was central."
- "It had to be structural, giving full representation to women and black people."
- "The third strand was culture. A cultural revolution was overdue in the entire movement, including the TUC."

The key issue in these debates is the question of power: who controls it and for what purpose. This is an important consideration which will need to be addressed in the information field as well.

Health services

"An inquiry found evidence that two-thirds of medical schools were guilty of racial discrimination... A plan, designed to 'ensure fairness, equality and transparency' will require medical schools to review their entry requirements and publish a detailed annual breakdown of their selection process.' " (Russell and Laurence, 1998).

Housing

"BME groups are disproportionately represented amongst those in housing needs." (Williams, H., 1999).

Radio

In a letter to the Controller of Radio 4 in February, 1993 the author questioned the relevance of Radio 4 to black communities. While a reply to the letter indicated that various initiatives have already been taken, the general White euro-centricity of the Broadcast media remains. For example, one hardly hears South Asian classical music on Radio 3. The growth of alternative radio and TV stations such as Spectrum, Sunrise, Greek Radio, Radio Afric as well as various pirate stations are gradually making the BBC even more remote from the lives of black people. As a public broadcast media, funded by taxpayers, BBC has an obligation to change. The points made in the above letter in 1993 remain broadly valid today, although recent developments following the appointment of Greg Dyke gives cause for optimism. These are discussed later in this paper. In the meantime, there is an urgent need for action that involves black communities. There is an urgent need to discuss openly the direction that

BBC should take. Some points raised in the letter mentioned above need wider debate:

> Radio 4 has built up excellent programmes in almost every field but it is a matter of regret that it has remained so very Euro-centric. A visitor to Britain would never guess that there are people here from Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America. Why does news, cultural and literary output from these countries not get adequate importance in your output? Such programmes would be of interest not only to those who originally come from these countries, but would also help the natives to understand the rich cultures of these countries. There could perhaps be less racist attacks then.
>
> It is not asking too much to expect an hour long programme every day, perhaps entitled *From The Three Continents*, with news and cultural programmes (music, literature, discussion programmes). The World Service produces programmes such as *Focus on Africa* which could provide some contents. There is also a large population from the three Continents in Britain, many of whom have a wide knowledge about their countries of origin. Yet this potential has not been used by the media.
>
> Even "normal" programmes do not carry enough material of interest to British residents from these continents. What about discussing good films from India or reviewing Latin American novels or broadcasting African drama and music in cultural programmes *as a regular practice?* Black newspapers do not get coverage in daily or weekly press reviews. Is it perhaps because some of them are too radical, for example seeing double standards in UN and U.S. response to Iraq? You would be playing an important educational and informative role if you saw not only starvation in Africa but explored the *real* cause of starvation in Africa
>
> Please remember that when you report that Britain has sold Tornadoes and other armaments to dictators around the world, we think of the potential deaths that will be rained down on our brothers and sisters with these weapons. Do not glorify such business "success". (Durrani, 1993)

Racism and the law

Laws which oblige local authorities to consider equalities issues in the planning and delivery of their functions and services include the Local Government Act 1992 and the Race Relations Act 1976.

Race Relations Act 1976 & Amendment Bill (2000)

The Race Relations Act 1976 makes it unlawful to discriminate directly or indirectly on the grounds of colour, race, nationality (including citizenship), or ethnic or national origin, or to apply requirements or conditions which are disadvantageous to people of a particular racial group, and which cannot be justified on non-racial grounds. The Act covers all local government services as well as discriminatory treatment of employees and discriminatory recruitment and selection process.

Section 71 of the Act places an obligation on local authorities to carry out their various functions in such a way as to seek to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and to promote equality and good relations between persons of different racial group. CRE's *Code of Practice; Race Relations* gives a "practical guidance which will help employers, trade unions, employment agencies and employees to understand not only the provisions of the Race Relations Act and their implications, but also how best they can implement policies to eliminate racial discrimination and to enhance equality of opportunity".

The Race Relations (Amendment) bill now being discussed at Cabinet level (April 2000) "represents the first quantum leap forward in race equality legislation since the setting up of the CRE in 1976" (Travis, 2000). The bill seeks to make institutional racism illegal and places new legal duty on public bodies to promote equality. Yet Singh (2000) warns that it is in danger of becoming "hopeless" and a "waste of time" unless two amendments are made:

1. Requirements on tackling racism must be extended to all public bodies, including the police and immigration services.
2. A positive duty to be placed on all public-sector bodies to produce annual figures on how they are promoting equality policies.

However these points are now included in the Bill, as Jack Straw (2000) said:

> The Race Relations Amendment Bill which is now before Parliament extends the laws against direct and indirect discrimination to the whole public sector and imposes a positive duty to promote racial equality on all public authorities. Targets for recruitment, retention and promotion of ethnic minority staff across the public service are now being set.

It remains to be seen if the Bill also addresses the need of including issues around racism in school curriculum as pointed out by Sir Herman Ouseley. There needs to be an urgent debate in the LIS sector to look at the implication of these changes in law in libraries.

Local Government Act 1966

Under the Local Government Act 1966, local authorities are required to make annual reports on citizens charter performance indicators, a number of which cover equal opportunities in service delivery and employment. The Audit Commission's Equal Opportunities Performance Indicators aim to measure how successfully councils are implementing the Commission for Racial Equality's Code of Practice. Some external quality awards such as Investors in People and Chartermark also require equalities performance indicators.

Section 11 of the Act provided mechanism for all local authorities to establish posts to address the needs of people from ethnic minorities.

Local Government Acts 1988

The Act sets out a framework within which local authorities can ensure that companies and other bodies applying for inclusion in select or approved lists take reasonable steps to comply with the Race Relations Act and the CRE Race Relations Code of Practice in Employment.

The Children Act 1989

The Act places an obligation on social service departments to take account of a child's religion, racial origin, cultural and linguistic background.

Blacks may be in the society but they are not part of the society... the struggle today is the same as in 1962 – for justice and dignity.

- Dr. Wilfred Wood, Bishop of Croydon & President of the Institute of Race Relations (Jan 2000). Quoted in *Goan Overseas Digest* 8(2)2000

PART 2: EMPLOYMENT OF BLACK WORKERS

> **The problems facing communities are collective, not personal; black people are discriminated against as a race**
> - Gary Younge (2000)

As with other aspects of racism, employment of black staff and managers in LIS should first be seen in the context of employment situation in society as a whole. The situation in LIS can then be more meaningfully examined and appropriate solution worked out.

A recent Government report, DfEE (1999), acknowledges the existence of racial discrimination in employment of black people when it says "People from ethnic minority backgrounds have higher unemployment rates regardless of their qualifications or where they live". It continues:

> People from ethnic minority backgrounds face racial discrimination in the job market. Inequality is pervasive. People from ethnic minority backgrounds are not securing jobs in proportion to their total numbers in the population. People from ethnic minority backgrounds are rarely represented in proportion to their numbers in the workforce at senior levels of organisations in all sectors of the economy…the effect is an institutional bar to advancement based on race. This is unacceptable.

Chapter 4 of *Jobs for All* provides "a range of concrete strategies to eradicate discrimination in the labour market". These need to be implemented by all employers. It also provides a useful tool for black people in their struggle for equality. However, until there is a lead body on racial equality in the information field to ensure such strategies are promoted and implemented, little progress will be made. The body will need legal powers to enforce compliance to ensure that these strategies are implemented: mere recommendations will not result in desired outcomes.

Labour Force Survey (LFS) for 1997 showed the discrimination against black workers in terms of employment (Quoted in TUC, 1998, p.3):

- Unemployment rate for black workers is 15%, compared to 6.6% for white workers.
- Unemployment of black men is 18.5% and just over 15% for black women, compared with 8.3% for white men and 6.1% for white women
- Unemployment rate for under 25-year old black male workers was 32%, and 33% for black women under 25 years. This compares with 13% (men) and 10% (women) for white people in the same age range.

The problem also goes further than service provision and employment. A recent study by the LGMB revealed that only 3% of local authority elected members are black and other minority ethnic people, yet the black and other minority ethnic population is estimated to be 6% in England and Wales. (*The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Home Secretary's Action Plan* (1999).

Cunningham (1996) points out that "in the case of the public authorities mentioned in the examples above [education, policing, urban policies such as Single Regeneration Budget, the Health Authority, local authorities] all have equal opportunity statements and policies, all have service standards, yet racial discrimination and disadvantage remain at unacceptably high levels." She looks at the effects of this discrimination in the workplace:

> Given this scenario it is perhaps not surprising that there is a fear of discrimination and of unequal treatment which puts off ethnic minorities from entering the [LIS] profession. And I would suggest that it is also discrimination, direct or indirect, which leads to ethnic minorities being found at the lower grades.

Research shows that black workers face discrimination at work which unfairly limits their ability to make the most of their skills and talents compared to white employees. TUC(2000) reports on the situation:

> Data from the government's Labour Force Survey (LFS) shows that racism continues to be a major barrier at work for black and Asian employees, unfairly limiting career progression and development once in employment. The LFS statistics also show that, proportionately, many more black employees are trapped in part time-jobs against their will and that this further limits opportunities for career development. Furthermore, these trends have occurred against a backdrop of rising skill levels among black workers, with the latest statistics showing that they are much more likely to hold higher level qualifications compared to their white counterparts. (p.1).

Meanwhile, even as white unemployment rate is coming down, it is going up among black communities. The level of joblessness among black people is twice the white employment rate. (Travis, 2000 quotes from a TUC study).

Black and other minority ethnic people make up almost 6% of British population. Yet "only 1.4 per cent of chief executives, chief officers and deputy chief officers come from black or other minority ethnic backgrounds." Overall local government in England and Wales employs over two million people. Of these approximately 700,00 are involved in white-collar administrative and professional functions. Local Government Management Board (1998b, p.7) found that in a sample of 53 local authorities for whom ethnic monitoring data was available, there were 6000 BME employees in management positions at Senior Officer grades, i.e. SO1 and above.

The LGMB Survey substantiated the claims made by many BME local authority employees in terms of the obstacles they face in reaching high levels of management:

- White staff generally occupy more senior positions in the hierarchy, whereas BME staff are much more evenly spread. A high proportion of BME staff remain at the bottom – with seven or more tiers of managers above them
- Considerable differences show up between BME and white managers in the length of time they have had management responsibilities. Only 9 per cent of BME staff have managed for over 10 years against 43 per cent of white. In general white officers manage greater numbers of staff.
- The majority of the group participants agree that BME managers face unequal access for resources for development. This is supported in the survey findings.

There is only one black member of staff at Senior Civil Service Grade 3. People of Colour are seen as "space invaders" in higher levels of civil service and in the academic world where there are only 2.3% Professors from black and Ethnic Minority communities ("Thinking Aloud" BBC Radio 4, April 19,2000). The few people of colour who reach this rarefied position find the environment extremely hostile.

Paul Gilroy's assertion that he feels "at ease" in USA after working in Britain is a common experience for people of colour in Britain where they are under constant pressure to strive for "equality" – which in reality means to speak the "legitimate language", to "fall in line" and "be the same" as the mostly white, male, middle class who are the rightful owners of this space which is protected from invasion by those "who do not belong".

It is important to examine what BME staff themselves see as barriers to their advancement in local authorities. Local authorities will need to investigate (in co-operation with BME staff) their own policies and practices to identify if such perceived barriers are real and, if so, take steps to change the situation. If found to be not substantiated, reasons for such perceptions will need to be investigated. The LGMB Survey identified the following, among others:

- BME managers feel that white staff seem to take precedence in gaining access to training, and a significant number mentioned discrimination as a barrier to progress
- BME managers are keenly aware of the barriers to reaching top jobs. These included not being ready, having insufficient right qualifications, being over qualified, having a face which does not fit, and the lack of line management experience.
- Additional barriers, actual or perceived, faced by BME managers include local government not being ready for a BME chief officer or chief executive; being more reluctant than their white counterparts in applying for top posts; elected members acting s gatekeepers; and the need not to be seen as someone who will rock the boat.
- BME participants in the Survey also talked about limited access to non-financial resources: such as time, information, secondments, project work, and the lack of commitment from top managers.

The Library field

The situation of black workers and managers in public libraries is no better than that in other fields. Khan (2000) quotes Bob McKee, the Chief Executive of the Library Association:

> He (Bob McKee) went on to say that our profession, particularly at senior levels, does not reflect the ethnic and cultural diversity of our communities. Figures show that 1.2 per cent of LA members describe themselves as Asian, African or Caribbean - a total of 286 people [out of total membership of almost 24,000] of whom just three individuals declare a salary of more than £27,000 per year.

It is only after the publication of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report and the high level of publicity about the existence of racism in the country that the profession has begun to pay more than lip service to even admitting racism in libraries. The voice of black librarians has been conspicuous by its absence in the debate on racism. When it is raised, it is either within the confines of meetings of black workers or have to be issued without names, for example the anonymous comments about experiences of racism in libraries from 9 black librarians (Case Studies, 1999). These make eye-opening reading for those not aware of the situation of black LIS workers. Those who preside over such work places need to be investigated:

- There were five black librarians on Section 11 funding in our borough. This funding was abolished, and there was no means for us to assimilate. Management after Union pressure decided to create two mainstream posts to replace the five – one of the same grade, one on a lower grade...three experienced black librarians lost their jobs. We were marginalised to start with and this experience only served to show how discriminatory management were to black staff and services to ethnic minorities - *Caribbean Chartered librarian, 18 years experience, East London.*
- After taking out a grievance against my boss for racial harassment, it was found that this manager had been found guilty of racial discrimination by Councillors. Instead of being dismissed, the only recommendation was that he not be promoted. What hope has the whole system got in overcoming racism when the rot starts from the top and even politicians are involved – *Nigerian Librarian, 12 years' experience, North London.*
- I succeeded in getting the post of branch manager over a white colleague. This colleague who then became my deputy was intent on not working with me, refused to do anything I asked and undermined me and ridiculed me to junior staff. I protested and sent a complaint to senior management... the situation did not improve. I felt this was racial harassment, a sackable offence. Eventually all that the management did was to transfer him. I had no apology or investigation of the matter. I believe that if I, as a black man, was found harassing anyone I would be dismissed instantly. How can black professionals get into management and remain there when we are undermined like this – Chartered Nigerian librarian and consultant, over 30 years' experience.

- In a general survey carried out by our local authority, it was found that there are no blacks in senior management in their library service. I am not surprised. The reason given for this was a lack of movement i.e. the senior tier were stuck in posts. I do not accept this reason however, whites have been moving in and out of top tier posts for the 15 years I have been there. Black chartered and experienced librarians have never been given a chance – *Jamaican Chartered librarian, 18 years' expedience, East London Borough.*
- I applied and was interviewed for the post of Head of reference Services, a position that I had held in another London Borough. I did not get the post which was offered to a colleague, a white librarian on a lower grade with far less experience than me and had never worked at the required level. When I asked why I failed, the written reply was that I did not have an adequate knowledge of the literature. I responded demonstrating that I did, and that I felt that I was racially discriminated against...the matter has now been included as part of a general overall grievance of racial harassment against my manager. Obviously, my Black face does not fit - *Chartered Black British librarian, over 20 years' experience, North London Borough.*
- In 1983 I joined a public library to work as an assistant, a fresher from a foreign university. It has been a long and strenuous journey since then. Strenuous, because I found it difficult to come to terms with events taking place around me. I used to be filled with discontentment when I saw colleagues rising up to higher grades and power with the same qualification, skill and experience I have. I felt, these colleagues had one qualification more than me, and that is, they are 'white'... Years later, I left to work in another Borough Council.

  The new job was an assistant job where I felt too many people were interested to manage me. Each manager acted as mini Hitler. I found myself under constant scrutiny under these mini Hitlers...At one point I was passed over for promotion but other managers ganged up to recommend their favourites. This authority adopted an Equal Opportunity Policy in 1985. I couldn't see any difference with or without EOP, as not a single person has ever been recruited from black or Asian community since 1985...The mini Hitlers are very much everywhere.

  I have my own theory of putting things right: (a) greater emphasis on training for managers; they must demonstrate their sense of fairness towards Black and Asian staff; (b) Managers must have 'listening ears' and are aware of 'staff care' (staff are trained enough on customer care!); (c) There should be an independent referral unit within the Department to deal with claims of race discrimination by staff.

  Unless authorities give greater priority to the above issues, inequalities and discrimination will persist - *Asian library staff from a London Borough.*
- There can be no quality without equality. Asian librarians with language skills are discriminated on pay scale. Mainstreaming has made the system worse in service delivery. Research has shown that the library

usage is mainly by Asians in particular libraries but there are no Asian staff to serve them. When we plan to promote a specific service, the typical comments from colleagues and managers are: it would create more enquiries we may not be able to handle due to shortage of staff – what does this suggest?

These token Asian librarians work in isolation, are not members of library groups – they do not have any staff to work with or manage – without experience how can they progress? The Management structure is such that Asian librarians can never be part of Management - comments of an Asian librarian.

- *Academic qualification: MA (Eng. Lit); Professional qualification: BT (3 years teaching experience); ALA (Post-Graduate Librarianship): Joined London Borough Library, 1966.* In 1977, I was appointed Community Services Librarian under Sec. 11... By late 80s the Management had changed considerably for the worst – racist managers in post! As a result, within 2 years our job descriptions were changed 3 times, not only that, to add insult to injury we were demoted. All this happened to only our department. To me it was 'institutional racism' at its worse. I protested to the Council, the local MP, the LA, but nobody lifted a finger to help the department. By 1992 the inevitable happened – the department was scrapped. If this is not ethnic cleansing, I don't know what is. Specially, the *LA Record* should be ashamed for not mentioning a single line on this disaster (I was in contact with the LA throughout the dispute) and exercising censorship in not publishing my article on the premise that it was libellous. What is the purpose of the LA and the *LA Record* if not to publicise injustice and lend a helping hand to its members? I took the Borough to the Industrial Tribunal. The pity is that tax-payers' money is being spent on retaining racist and incompetent managers.

1993 – to date: working as Ethnic Services Librarian on SO1 (I was on this grade 20 years' ago! Name me one 'white librarian' with my academic and professional qualifications and over 32 years of library service and still on SO1 grade...It is incumbent on the Government and LA to 'name and shame' poor performing authorities if they really mean business and want the library scene (ethnic minorities) to change for the better in the 21st century - *Asian librarian of 32 years' experience.*

The role of Library Association

The British Library Association's Annual Report for 1998 – celebrating the "Royal Charter Centenary" – fails to mention the Association's and the profession's relevance or otherwise to the black communities. This was in a year when the Government challenged library authorities to address the question of social exclusion in the British society, when the first ever Annual Library Plan scored a very poor mark in social exclusion.

The Association has an Equal Opportunities Sub Committee which has the responsibility over race issues. It has published a number of guidelines on equal opportunities (Library Association). It also organises the annual "black Contribution to Librarianship" conferences which to date have not led to any action to combat racism. The Association also has "in liaison" relationship with two black associations: African Caribbean Library Association (ACLA) and Asian Librarians and Arts Officers Group (ALAG) – which themselves have not only not been active in combating racism in libraries, but have actively opposed the formation of a Black Workers Group within LA. Nor do they have any credible membership in the communities they supposedly represent. It seems convenient for the Library Association to be seen to be "in liaison" with inactive, unrepresentative organisations so that it can claim to be "in contact" with black LIS workers and thus avoid any accusation of institutional racism within the organisation.

While there are useful initiatives from individuals and some Library Association groups, the organisation has, until very recently, remained rather aloof from taking an active part in addressing institutionalised racism and in addressing the lack of action by public libraries to respond actively to the needs of black populations. To a large extent, the LA remains a "white" organisation concerned more with its royal charter and procedures and formalities than trying to address the real needs of a changing population. While almost a hundred black LIS workers attend its annual "Diversity: Black contribution to British librarianship" conferences, very few choose to become members.

For the Library Association, it seems enough to spend a little time every year on such a conference, clear its conscience, and go back to its "normal" lifestyle for another year. No fundamental issues about black librarianship are considered, no debates about giving power to black LIS workers to put some of their ideas into action. A few nice speeches from worthy personalities and an opportunity for black LIS workers to be present at the citadel of library power is all that emerges from these conferences. As Khan (1999) asks, "But we are still talking about the issue of multicultural library services - just how far have we come?"

An attempt was made by some librarians to make the Association take some action to address the question of race in the profession. A motion at the Annual General Meeting of the Association in 1996 read:

> 'Issues of race and class are as relevant and important to the library community as they are to society at large. A well-attended meeting of black library workers held at the LA in April revealed that the Association needs to be proactive in its recruitment of these workers and that those who are already members should be encouraged to be more involved in LA activities. We therefore call upon this AGM to recommend to Council:
>
> (1) that the LA establishes a formal Black Library Workers Group, which will have the same status (capitation, Council members, etc, as other LA groups);

(2) that the LA organises an annual conference for Black Library Workers. (*Library Association Record* 8(9) September 1996).

The essence of the motion was lost through some technical amendments. The annual black conferences are being held, but no progress has been made on the formation of the Black Workers Group. The Association was happy to hide behind technicalities of wanting 100 signatures before such a group could be formed. This creates a Catch-22 situation: the Association does not attract black librarians and few white members are interested in signing-up for a black workers group. The Association's conscience is clear – it has not opposed the formation of a black group. Yet its technicalities prevent such a formation. Meanwhile black LIS workers and communities remain unserved and under-represented.

Yet there is reason to be optimistic for the future. A promising development in 1999 is the endorsement of the findings of Roach and Morrison (1998) by the Association of London Chief Librarians (ALCL). As the President of the ALCL says, "This study suggested that there is a need for a radical rethink of the role of the public library within a multi-ethnic, multicultural society. These findings were of special concern to chief librarians in London." (Timms, 1999). The Association has adopted a strategy for implementing the recommendations of the Warwick (Roach and Morrison) study and has included this in its Action Plan. "This will enable London's public libraries to enter the next millennium in a strong position to meet the needs of its ethnic minority communities". This is indeed a welcome development. As part of its reorganisation, the ALCL has also set up a Social Exclusion Group which has been extremely active in the few months it has been in existence. It has also co-sponsored the Quality Leaders Project for black LIS workers.

As far as the Library Association is concerned, the new Chief Executive has now given assurance on action he expects to take (Khan 2000):

- The LA will listen to the experiences and views of black library and information workers and will seek to learn from them;
- These views will help to shape the future policy of the LA...the LA Council has resolved to hold a full debate on the black contribution at its June 2000 meeting;
- LA support will continue.

The new commitment from the Chief Executive is a welcome initiative. Already there is more coverage of black issues in the pages of the *Library Association Record* – although not regular columns as recommended by the resolution at the LA AGM in 1996 - "a regular column in the *Library Association Record* or quarterly supplement to the LAR" (*Library Association Record* 8(9) September 1996).

One hopes that black library workers and community members will be able to participate in the "full debate" at the Council and that it will result in empowerment of black workers and communities and the formation of a Black

Library Workers Group and that there will be more black people on the decision making bodies of the Association.

In April 2000, Bob McKee, the Chief Executive of LA presented a draft "LA Corporate Plan (2000)" to progress his vision for "an integrated, inclusive and influential professional body" (McKee, 2000). The Plan's "framework of strategic objectives and key actions" includes "Working towards integration and inclusion". In order to achieve a "clear profile and strong role for the L/I (Library and Information) sector", McKee proposes that the Association will "seek to reflect within the Association the ethnic and cultural diversity of UK society... in order to address the issue of institutional racism and promote the black contribution to the library and information sector." This is a welcome development and one hopes that action to implement this will include meaningful ways to address poor record in service to black communities and lack of black presence in decision making levels, not only in the profession as a whole, but within LA as well.

"Working with bodies such as ACLA and ALAG" as the Plan proposes will not result in any meaningful change as experience of "working with such bodies" over the last three or four years shows. There is no point in hanging on to failed methods of bringing about change just because it may be too difficult to take a strategic approach. Past failures need to inform action for the future. More imaginative and bold vision and means of achievement are needed if the Association hopes to make itself relevant to black communities. In particular, new tools such as Best Value show the importance of empowering black communities and L/I workers and a new approach along these lines can provide grounds for meaningful change.

It is useful to compare the American Library Association's approach to addressing needs of people of colour in the USA. In terms of professional organisation, American Library Association is decades ahead of the British Library Association in supporting the needs of black workers and communities. ALA uses its Office for Literacy and Outreach Services to "ensure that the ethnic caucuses of the ALA are supported in their effort to ensure that the issues and concerns of ethnic minority library professionals and ethnic minority populations are properly addressed" (Reese and Hawkins, 1999). The ALA recognises the following caucuses as affiliates:

- ALA Ethnic Caucuses
- Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association
- Black Caucus of the ALA
- National Association to promote Library Services to the Spanish Speaking (people)
- Chinese-American Librarians Association
- American Indian Library Association

While libraries in the USA are not at the cutting edge of race policies, they certainly make more effort than the profession does in Britain. Some of their practices need to be studied for implementation in UK. The existence of a large number of black Universities in the USA over many years has, no doubt, contributed to strengthening the profession there.

Culture of change; change of culture

While the need for "change of culture" is gradually becoming accepted in the LIS world, its role in combating racism has not been sufficiently explored. There seems to be a general reluctance to talk openly about the need to address racism at workplace. There is a feeling in some workplaces that any attempt to address racism automatically implies a criticism of the management and staff's commitment to an "equal" service. The attitude often is: " we are already providing a 'good' service to black communities, so there is no need for change". In essence, this is a refusal to change, a refusal to look at service provision from the point of view of black communities, a refusal to accept results of research such as Roach and Morrison, a refusal to accept the conclusions and recommendations from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.

"Race equality must be a key part of our political and managerial agenda for change," says Local Government Association (1999). It continues:

> A renewed approach to race and equality work needs to maximise the public sector's current knowledge about managing change...What we know is that achieving and sustaining major cultural change is complex, difficult and often fails. What is required is a many-levered approach, which involves and motivates staff at all levels...All local authorities need to take action, whatever the size of their local black, Asian and ethnic minority community. This action could be included in the council's top ten priorities for the coming year and incorporated into Best Value reviews and community planning work. (p.10).

John (1995) quotes the example of Hackney – which reflects experiences in many other London Boroughs - and provides useful insights on how change in culture can prove a useful tool against racism:

> We should have a perspective on the dynamic potential for growth as we try to make our services relevant. Hackney Council earned itself good reputation as an employer [in the 1980s]. It employed many black people [but at lower levels]. It did not ask itself what then happens once BEM staff get employed. There are blockages and the question then is how to get rid of these blockages to BEM employees getting higher jobs and not to leave them at the bottom.
>
> How do you enable staff to participate fully in the running of the organisation? Policy and practice are two important ways in which these problems will be addressed [in Hackney]. The Action for Change will guide the Directorate of Education and Leisure Services to resolve the problems that exist in Libraries. Issues to be addressed will include stock, staffing, and access to library service. Policy and Resource implications of the necessary changes will be addressed. Change of

> culture is necessary to address the issues of rights, entitlement, quality with equality, service delivery, and management issues.

Not much progress, however, seems to have been made as was confirmed by an inquiry in 1999 (Local Government Association, 1999, p.18):

> Hackney has embarked on an ambitious programme to eliminate racial discrimination from its workforce. The council ordered an independent inquiry into race discrimination in 1997. This inquiry found that although the council was very good at recruiting black, Asian and ethnic minority staff, it discriminated against them once they were in post. Following this inquiry, the council has committed itself to a cultural change programme to eradicate institutional racism. One priority is to ensure that unacceptable action and practices are not only challenged but also prevented from occurring in the first place.

The experience in Haringey is similar. Travis (2000) says that 48% of the workforce is drawn from black and minority communities. However, Gurbux Singh, the new Chair of CRE who was the Chief Executive at Haringey says:

> But the vast majority are located at the bottom of the system. At the top…there is this glass ceiling. Minority ethnic communities have not broken through at assistant director or director level. We want to address that. We did it by setting targets and not quotas. Once you have any sort of target system it helps to focus minds.

Local Government Association (1999) mentions the following "Mechanisms for achieving Change":

- The Race Relations Act;
- The Human Rights Act 1998;
- Local Authority Performance Indicators.

Have you heard of barriers because of glass ceilings?
Areas you cannot enter.
There are no glass ceilings, just layers of people
Thick layers of people – making decisions.
So take the challenge and break the glass
Help to create social inclusion
Stamp out racism from libraries.

- Fairclough, P (1999)

PART 3: THE BLACK COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE

> **The solution to racism lies in our ability to see its ubiquity but not concede its inevitability**.
> - Williams, P. J. (1977)

Many sections of the black communities seem to be caught in a vicious circle of greater unemployment, poorer education, worse housing than white people. These make it difficult for them to demand their fair share of national services, including library services. Their disadvantage is compounded by the lack of interest among some libraries to make genuine efforts to reach out to them.

According to *Bringing Britain Together* (1998, p.30), "Ethnic minority disadvantage cuts across all aspects of deprivation. Taken as a whole, ethnic minority groups are more likely than the rest of the population to live in poor areas, be unemployed, have low incomes, live in poor housing, have poor health, and be the victims of crime." Some facts are relevant:

- people from the Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are one and a half times as likely to suffer ill health, and African-Caribbean people are a third more likely, than white people;
- 41 per cent of African-Caribbean, 45 per cent of Indians, 82 per cent of Pakistani and 84 per cent of Bangladeshi people have incomes less than half the national average compared with 28 per cent of white people;
- one survey found that less than half of Pakistani women and only a quarter of Bangladeshi women between 25 and 44 had fluent English. Proportions were lower still for older age ranges.

A casual look through papers for the last year or two will show an increase in column-inches devoted to issues of race. This indicates that following the struggles around the murder of Stephen Lawrence, more black people are standing up to be counted as victims of racism; the press is also more likely to report such cases. At the same time, right-wing papers such as *The Sun* and *the Daily Mail* continue their efforts to prevent any real change. Kundnani (2000) documents such efforts following the release of the Macpherson Inquiry Report.

Racism is not inevitable in a society. It can be combated and defeated if there is a will to do so, if its root causes are understood, and if it is seen as an issue not only for black people, but one for the society as a whole. Roach and Morrison's (1998) carefully-worded conclusion that "the public library service has not yet managed to engage fully with ethnically diverse communities", should be seen in the context of an all-pervading racism in society as a whole.

Most, if not all, black communities have set up their own community groups. Their main activities include education and in the field of culture. Many run their own library and information services, indicating clearly that their local libraries do not provide them the services they need. Elliott (1986) found that fifty-nine (33.7 per cent) out of the 175 organisations that responded to the questionnaire loaned books and 28 (66.7 per cent) out of 42 organisations visited had libraries. Elliott gives some examples of "self-help libraries set up by Minority Ethnic Groups" and indicates their links with their local libraries:

- Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan UK Centre – There is no co-operation between Bhavan and Hammersmith Public Libraries.
- Muslim Welfare House and Information Services – The local public Library service (Islington) does not help, but the community librarian has visited the library.
- Union of Turkish Progressives in England - The local public Library service (Islington) does not help, but the community librarian has visited the library.

Olden et al (1996) provide some recent record of services to black communities. However, there is no clear policy of working closely with black self-help libraries and educational services. While there is a general lack of research in issues around racism against black communities and library workers, there have been a number of well researched reports on the current situation. Roach and Morrison's (1998) pioneering research today remains almost a forgotten piece of work collecting dust on seldom-used library shelves. Olden et al (1996) collected experiences which have failed to ignite research and improved services. Olden also researched the needs of the Somali community in London. Again, Hackney Library Services' Black and Ethnic Minority Workers Group (1994) provided a comprehensive report on providing a relevant library service. Nobody seems to have taken this important report seriously. Some experiences of racism and some possible action in non-LIS sectors are discussed in a related paper to this Working Paper (Durrani 1999a).

Durrani, and Joyce (2000) report on the findings from a study of three library services completed recently by the Management Research Centre, University of North London as part of the Quality Leaders Project for Black LIS Workers. The case studies covered Birmingham, Bradford and Merton:

> Local authority libraries have had important successes in addressing the needs of black and ethnic minority communities. There are achievements in terms of book stocks purchased to better meet black and ethnic minority interests, popular music sections, social events and book fairs, and one-off projects of various kinds. But there are complaints that despite many good intentions black and ethnic minority community needs are neglected and that good practice waxes and wanes. It appears the good work is not built on and, equally concerning, it is often not sustained.

It is however important to see the point of view of black communities and workers. Durrani (1999b) examines the existence of racism in public libraries.

Community librarianship

A number of studies have looked at the development of community librarianship - for example, Vincent (1986), Black and Muddiman (1997), Muddiman (1999), Black (2000). Community librarianship "advocated a more flexible and diversified form of public library provision which would enable resources to be targeted at the disadvantaged." (Muddiman, 1999, p.5). Muddiman sees it as a "significant (if ultimately unsuccessful) attempt by some public library authorities to address disadvantage and social exclusion in library terms."

Black (2000) traces the history and scope of "community librarianship":

> Drawing on this example [in the USA] as well as their own tradition of social realism, many British librarians similarly embarked on a new course of action, one which discriminated in favour of the socially and economically deprived. This mode of service came to be known as 'community librarianship' which embodied 'a recognition that public library services are for all, not only for the better educated, more affluent "middle class" minority from whom the service has tended to draw its clientele, but also for the less literate, the disadvantaged, those who are perhaps less book-oriented but whose need for information and for life-enrichment may be greater'.[B. Totterdell]. Moreover authentic community librarianship demands not only sophisticated, qualitative research into the complexion and needs of local communities (community profiling), but also the pro-active involvement of librarians in these communities, along the lines of contemporary practice in community work.

An integral part of community librarianship was service to black communities. As early as 1986, Vincent identified racism as a "major concern [which] is overlooked or ignored in much of the writing about provision of services." Years before Macpherson brought "institutional racism" to prominence, Vincent recognised its existence in the society and in the library:

> It should not now need to be argued that the UK is an inherent racist society, and that this racism shows itself in its institutions (of which libraries are an example) and in its products (which include library material)...Library workers must play a central role in recognising and combating racism. (Vincent, 1986, p.17).

It is a matter of great satisfaction that after all these years, John Vincent is still steadfastly combating racism and other forms of social exclusion. The same, sadly, cannot be said for the profession as a whole. But nobody in the library field today can say that they are not aware of racism and its manifestation. They may have chosen to ignore it or may have created an *impression* of having addressed it and so avoid the accusation of being "racist". But such tokenism does not solve a social and ethical problem. Even after the publication of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report, it is only a few Heads of Libraries who accept the existence of racism in libraries, let alone trying to eliminate it. Among those who struggle actively against racism, perhaps the most prominent is John Pateman (Head of Library and Heritage Services, Merton) who often gets dismissed by those who do not want to address racism in libraries as "being too partisan." If only we had more partisan librarians, eliminating racism would not be such a major problem as it is today.

The problem of poor service for black communities which community librarianship sought to overcome was recognised long time ago. Black (2000) quotes some cases:

> Librarians began to express guilt over the exclusion of lower socio-economic groups from the public library. These groups included the unsuccessful ethnic minorities. In 1972, for example, in considering services to immigrant groups, Westminster City Libraries admitted that the 'public libraries are continuing to serve their communities as they existed 10-15 years ago, oblivious to the changes that have taken place in the intervening period' (R. Brown). Six years later, the chair of the Commission for Racial Equality wrote that an inadequate provision of books in public libraries *about* the ethnic minorities, as well as *for* them in their vernacular languages, represented 'a hole in the multi-cultural fabric of our contemporary society'. (D. Lane in Foreword to Clough & Quarmby, 1978).

In order to succeed, community librarianship needed to undertake "wholesale 'deinstitutionalisation' of the public library service; " instead it remained "an uneven and limited phenomenon - extensive activity running throughout the whole library service was exceptional" (Muddiman, 1999). Eventually, from mid-1980s, community librarianship "lost momentum and support. Against the backdrop of political hostility and cuts in public services, [some?] librarians began to believe that its expense could not be justified". (Black, 2000).

Indeed, the positive aspects of community librarianship were never accepted by the profession as a whole. Nor were any alternatives suggested. Black (2000) again examines professional hostility to the practices of community librarianship:

> Community librarianship required a reorientation of the librarian towards community work, a trend which some viewed as a threat to professional status: 'There is no doubt that some of the activities engaged in by librarians in the course of community librarianship were not entirely appropriate', remarked one of the pioneers of services to the disadvantaged in the early 1990s (P. Coleman).
>
> Further, the targeting of the disadvantaged in preference to other user groups appeared to counter the welfarist creed of universalism to which many public librarians deeply attached.

Black(2000) again highlights a fundamental tenet of community librarianship which perhaps made it a target of attacks from the traditional, "non-community" librarian:

> Whereas equal of opportunity has been an unassailable tenet of public library philosophy, community librarianship's pursuit of *equality of outcome*, where intervention is based on positive discrimination in an attempt to raise the disadvantage to a level and quality of use commensurate with that experienced by users in the middle of the social scale, was difficult for many to swallow.

The roots of the failure of community librarianship can be traced to what Black (2000) calls "strength of middle-class pressure." This then led to the community librarianship becoming "de-radicalised from mid-1980s onwards, its meaning being devalued into a slogan describing little more than a combination of community information, customer care and traditional outreach and extension services". (Black, 2000). This de-radicalisation can even today be seen in many traditional housebound and mobile services being grandly called "community service" when they do not even reach any black communities. In contradiction to such pseudo-community services, many community groups set up and run their own library and information services, quite unconnected to the public library service. Although starved of resources, they serve the needs of their communities much better than the public library service which then happily concentrate on serving its white, middle-class users.

Those seeking to improve service to black communities need to understand this basic contradiction in British public library service - between the white, middle-class control on the one hand and the black and working-class (potential) usage of the service. The problem of bringing about any meaningful change is so enormous that in most cases only minor, unsustainable projects are possible. This will remain the case until a revolutionary change takes place in the library world.

Hendry (2000) looks at the "malign neglect by successive Conservative governments" from 1979 to 1997 which saw "public services reduced, externalised, starved of resources, put out to 'competitive' tender…The ethos of community service was dismissed".

The positive lessons from community librarianship were thus never learnt. It was a loss to the society as a whole, but particularly to all those who were disadvantaged, including black communities. But the lessons are being learnt today through policies and practices currently associated with "social exclusion". "Libraries for all" would have been much closer if community librarianship had been allowed to evolve with the changing needs and times and to evolve its own theories and practices. The pioneers of community librarianship would have been considered heroes and heroines today instead of being condemned to closed chapters of history.

Empowering local communities

Too much has been imposed from above, when experience shows that success depends on communities themselves having the power and taking the responsibility to make things better.
- Tony Blair, PM in Foreword to *Bringing Britain Together (1998, p.7).*

Excluded communities know what they want, in what form, when and how. The role of library and information workers and Council services is to enable change to be put into practice so that the communities receive services they need. They hold a key responsibility because they are the holders of the resources and control the power to decide how these resources are used. Thus if the service is to change, library workers must be prepared to change themselves. And that requires a bold decision that there is a need for change, that past practices have left many communities excluded.

Empowering communities can too easily become an empty gesture, a mechanical *form* which avoids the *content* of giving the power to the community. As Halpin (2000, p. 10) says, "A number of elements are required to deliver full and inclusive representation. [Communities] have to be *part of the debate, part of policy making and part of implementation and development of policy.*" [Emphasis added]. Hilary Armstrong (1999) says:

> In reality, many, if not most, public service organisations fail the Macpherson test because they do not have the basic systems in place, research into community needs, consultation with community organisations, ethnic monitoring of service use, policy analysis of the results to enable them to know whether or not services are free of discrimination and sensitive to the different needs of minority ethnic communities.

A recent IPPR survey provides a useful checklist of methods that can be used to consult black communities. The report emphasises the "need for a more comprehensive approach if black and ethnic minority people are to be genuinely engaged in the decision making process." The recommendations of the report need to be taken seriously by libraries:

> The Government's legislative drive towards public involvement to ensure better service delivery and responsiveness to need, is clearly an important development and a major opportunity. The challenge is how to ensure that this is fairly applied to all groups including black and ethnic minority people. A number of key issues arise out of our initial work in this area.
>
> Firstly, there is a need for ensuring that black and ethnic minority groups are directly consulted to overcome criticisms about poor representation and tokenism, if permanent consultative committees are the main tools used.

> Secondly, consultation in relation to ethnic minorities remains patchy with some authorities seeking to mainstream it into their overall equality action plans and others continuing to treat it as an add-on. There is a clear need for the equality perspective to be integrated in all areas of policy.
>
> Thirdly, issues relating to discrimination and specific needs of ethnic minorities continue to render it necessary for separate consultation, particularly where there are language and other barriers to participation.
>
> Fourthly, there is a strong case for better communication, co-ordination and sharing of information within and between public authorities to ensure that the results of consultation exercises are fed into the decision making process.
>
> Finally, while there is much cause for optimism, with the Government's commitment to this issue, and the evidence of increasing effort by many public authorities to ensure effective consultation and participation, there remains a need for a more comprehensive approach if black and ethnic minority people are to be genuinely engaged in the decision making process. (Ali, 2000).

The BME Sub-Group of voluntary sector representatives under the Working Group on Government Relations secretariat has produced a draft "Compact Code of Good Practice on Government Relations with the Black and Minority Ethnic Voluntary Sector" (*CompactBME*, 2000). It aims to set a new framework for the relationship between the BME voluntary sector and the government at all levels. The Code aims to achieve a new partnership between Government and BME Sector and to achieve a positive difference in the relationship between government and the BME sector and improving outcomes for BME communities. Expected results of the Code include:

- Joint commitment to taking forward the race equality agenda at all levels.
- Better consultation and participation in policy and implementation.
- Capacity building, developing infrastructure and sustainability.

The library and information sector needs to work closely with voluntary organisations and sign up to the Code as a way of ensuring appropriate community consultations. Thus even in places where there may be few black communities or where there may be difficulties in working with local community organisations, such national bodies can represent the interests of local black communities.

Many black communities perceive current library services as inappropriate and "unequal." The collective failure of public libraries is indicated by the fact that three major reports and action plans have not been accepted in the planning process, and not systematically implemented. These are:

- Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) 1995. *Racial equality means quality; a standard for racial equality for local government in England and Wales.*
- Roach, P. and Morrison, M. (1998), "Public Libraries, ethnic diversity and citizenship". Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations, University of Warwick, Warwick.
- The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry; report of an inquiry by Sir William Macpherson. Presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department. 1999. London. The Stationary Office. CM 4262-I.

Roach and Morrison

Roach and Morrison's (1998) research provides a useful picture of the current situation nationally. In their research "to examine how public library services have engaged in response to the issue of ethnic diversity", they give their key findings:

- The public library service has not yet managed to engage fully with ethnically diverse communities;
- A social distance exists between the public library and ethnic minority communities which tends to exclude ethnic minority citizens whilst preserving professional autonomy;
- There is a lack of clear vision and leadership on ethnic diversity and racial equality matters within the public library service;
- Across the public library service there is a lack of coherence in strategies to identify and track the changing library needs of ethnic minority communities and in those strategies which seek to engage ethnic minorities in debate on the future of public library provision;
- The public library is not yet central to or sufficiently supportive of the social and community networks established by ethnic minorities;
- The structure, culture and ethnic profile of the public library service is restrictive in terms of service access and denies ethnic minorities a stake in the public library system;
- The public library service has failed to account fully for its progress in respect of race equality whilst current performance systems are largely colour-blind;
- The resource pressures on the public library service coupled with current uncertainty regarding the loss of special funds may present further challenges to ethnic minority engagement and inclusion.

Roach and Morrison (1998) looked forward to a new vision:

> This report demonstrates that there are a number of issues to be addressed within the British public library service as it reflects on what it has achieved at the end of its first 150 years. This research shows that ethnic diversity has highlighted new challenges for public libraries: the need to engage with local communities; the need to develop services from a community/citizens' perspective; the need to remain open and responsive to changing community needs; the need to recognise and value difference; the need to make resource choices based on community need rather than on tried-and-tested ways of

doing things. The recommendations made during the course of this report provide a clear indication of the need for a new national and local agenda to emerge to meet the challenges which have been highlighted. In particular, this report signals the need for action.

Stephen Lawrence Inquiry

"Racism does not only affect black, Asian and ethnic minority people; it impacts on all communities" says the Guidance for Local Authorities (*The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Home Secretary's Action Plan*, 1999). The Guidance recommends the preparation of an overall equalities strategy which encompass black, Asian and ethnic minority community groups, asylum seekers and refugees. It sets out the benefits in eliminating racism – something needed in a society steeped in racism:

> There are real benefits in eliminating racism, valuing ethnic and cultural diversity and effective racial equality policies. These include:
> - Enhancing local democracy and accountability by ensuring that the needs of all sections of the community are met; and that all these groups are involved in the local democratic process and Best Value performance reviews.
> - Providing services that are appropriate and accessible to the whole community by gaining a better understanding of customers and clients.
> - supporting good personnel practices.
> - Using peoples' talents to the full and becoming a local employer of choice.
> - Making the authority more attractive to clients, customers and the electorate.
> - Contributing to the local community.
> - Avoiding the costs of discrimination. (p.4).

The Report reflected the submission from CRE when it stated:

> It is incumbent on every institution to examine their policies and the outcome of their policies and practices to guard against disadvantaging any section of our communities. ...There must be an unequivocal acceptance of the problem of institutional racism and its nature before it can be addressed, as it needs to be, in full partnership with members of minority ethnic communities. (CRE, 1999).

The full impact of the Macpherson Inquiry's conclusions were attacked by the right wing press and their backers. Its programme was "the familiar English elite technique of integrating protest into a long-drawn-out process of reform which eventually results in the barest minimum of concessions" (Kundnani,2000, p.3). The response to the Macpherson report by the Government is summed up by Kundnani:

> The Macpherson report was meant to open up the issue of racism but, fearing a right-wing rebellion, the government brought in a reduced set of reforms, while tightening up a racist asylum policy.

Quality Leaders Project case studies

The Quality Leaders Project for Black Library & Information workers (QLP) is an initiative that addresses both the problem of value for the black community and equal employment opportunities within the library services, and it does so within a best value framework. The key proposition of this initiative is that the meeting of unrecognised or under-recognised needs (new needs) requires new services, and new services require new skills and know-how (including new management know-how). (Durrani and Joyce, 2000).

Three case studies had been identified: Birmingham, Bradford and Merton. Each case study involved interviewing members of the black community, library professionals, and managers.

The interviews with members of the black community were based on problem exploration. The interviews focused on the problems experienced in using the library service. The interviews were aimed at identifying a number of problems and getting interviewees to rate the problems that have the highest priority from the users' perspective.

Members of the public have many reasons for using library services including borrowing books, videos, and cassettes; seeking information; and reading periodicals. The problems of users were clustered around these issues:

1. Alignment of book and other stocks with preferences and interests of sections of the black community was a problem. An African-Caribbean user expressed dissatisfaction with the collection of black interest books provided by the library.
2. Another problem was the number and the design and implementation of events relevant to the black community.
3. A third problem was customer care. The scale of this problem seemed to differ with serious complaints being made in one case and few complaints being made in relation to standards of customer care in another case.
4. A fourth problem was accessibility to the library.
5. Another problem was identified as caused by other users. A user complained about levels of noise in the library.

Recommendations of the Quality Leaders Project for Black Library & Information Workers

- Developments in public library services are needed urgently to provide more value to black, Asian, and other ethnic minority communities.
- Service developments should be sensitive to a range of needs related to leisure time, cultural development, and education and vocational studies.

- There is a need for much more consultation of Black, Asian, and ethnic minority communities in relation to the content and delivery of services they receive from public library services.
- Service developments should have a clear impact on the resources and use of libraries by Black, Asian, and ethnic minority communities.
- Experiments with services offering book-fairs and cultural events should be used to create more consumer-oriented and dynamic interfaces between services and ethnic minority communities.
- Managers of public library services will need to address the need for continuous improvements in the services to Black, Asian, and ethnic minority communities by overcoming barriers to change caused by cynicism and pessimism among users and providers.
- Local authority best value performance plans and appropriate local performance indicators might be used to position services to Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority communities in the mainstream of efforts to modernise services.
- Local performance targets for the percentage of members of Black, Asian, and other ethnic minority communities using key library services should be set and should reflect an ambition to make the services more relevant and accessible to these communities.
- Increased investment in the data capacity of management information systems should be undertaken where it is necessary for accurate and timely reporting of performance against the local performance targets (for the use of library services by Black, Asian and other ethnic minority communities) and consequent improvement planning to eliminate performance deficiencies.

Some community to the Quality Leaders Project

"[With] Black authors, some may not be famous because people have not started buying their books. Perhaps if libraries were prepared to buy their books they would become famous. Sure, they have books by Toni Morrison, but it depends how many they buy. If you look at a popular book, say in the Black section, they will order just one book. But if you have the equivalent book [by a white author], there would be seven."

"There is a difference between Black British and Black American. We have different experiences. You cannot translate one to another. The US is more forward looking. We should get books on Ian Wright, Frank Bruno for example. Young black boys feel they can only see Michael Jordan on TV, that is their only link with him. With Frank Bruno, you have a chance of actually seeing him and getting his autograph. We should have more information on personalities over here. They are more accessible."

"In terms of [perceived lack of interest in] reading [among black communities], it goes back to slavery. Because we were banned from reading, not allowed to read. That is something that has persisted to this present day. The legacy of not reading has been following us until the present day.

PART 4: SOME PROBLEMS, SOME SOLUTIONS

You've got to change the whole culture, open up things that have previously appeared closed.
- Sir Herman Ouseley's (*The Guardian* October 2, 1997:17)

Equal opportunities, diversity or anti-racism?

Many local authorities have abandoned the practice of having race equality units and have replaced them with equality units which address not only race inequality but other equality matters such as lesbigay, women, disabilities as well. While aiming to "equalise" anti-discrimination policies and practices, the effect in many cases has been to dilute action against race equality.

Cunningham (1996) says, "many employers have adopted the term "Managing diversity" in place of equal opportunities when discussing programmes designed to promote fair treatment in employment." She makes clear the views of Commission for Racial Equality:

> In the Diversity debate, our position is clear. The Commission (CRE) welcomes the increasing recognition of the value of diversity in society and at work, and the standards we have developed for employers and local authorities reflect this. However, diversity policies are not an alternative to equal opportunity policies but an extension of them. If Diversity policies do not contain practical measures to address the cumulative effects of discrimination and dis-advantage they will not be effective.

John (1999) follows the history of "diversity":

> We started off with multi-culturalism, then we went into anti-racism, then that was thought to be not so impressive so you get rid of the race equality units and committees and you have something generic called Equal Opportunities. But that wasn't really quite sharp enough and it made it sound as through the race thing had gone off the agenda altogether, which it did and has and consequently we must adopt the Valuing Diversity, that is the new ball game. We are all committed these days to valuing diversity, workplace diversity, libraries diversity, bookshop diversity, all sorts of diversity, we value everything. The question is where was the agenda of valuing diversity long before any black person landed on these shores. The diversity that came from the rigid and almost impenetrable class divisions within society, the diversity that came from these regional identities of Scotland, England and Wales which are now being cemented in some political constructions called the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Parliament and so on and so forth. Diversity in relation to gender, diversity in relation to sexuality and sexual orientation, diversity in relation to age, diversity in relation to dialect, diversity in relation to languages and so

> forth. Where was all of that diversity and what is the evidence of that ever being valued within the systems that we operate.
>
> What I'm saying is that we have to excavate behind these commonsensical notions and really not be conned, either by policy makers, or by politicians, or by Chief Officers or by more junior officers who write reports for politicians in believing that these things have any real meaning.

While there is no overall picture of a service relevant to black communities emerging, it is true that a large number of initiatives are taking place throughout the country. *What's New; LARRIE's Quarterly Update* regularly records such initiatives.

Managers, commitments and structures

Perhaps the greatest resistance to eliminating racism comes from managers. Their position of power makes them "mini Hitlers." They control policies and practices in the workplace. However much Councillors and senior executives want equality, however many "equal Opportunity" policies there may be, without the active participation of middle and senior managers, there will not be any meaningful change. It is no longer enough merely to be "non racist" – managers should prove that they are actively anti-racists before they are allowed to continue having power over policies, staff and other resources and service delivery.

There is a growing awareness that business, civil service, as well as local authorities need to reflect the cultural diversity of the community they serve. While this has been put into practice in many local authorities, black staff have tended to remain at the lowest levels. Urgent action is needed now to ensure that such diversity is reflected in the higher, decision and policy-making levels of local authorities.

There can be no progress in providing an "equal" service for people of colour without having senior managers from these communities. They need to be involved in decision and policy making position so that the concerns of their communities are represented and given adequate representation at the highest levels, not only in the Library Services itself but in local authority as a whole. No meaningful change in policy and practices can result if there is an inadequate proportion of black managers.

The Local Government Management Board (1996, p. 1) says, "Black and other minority ethnic managers can make a unique and valuable contribution to improving performance and service delivery to the diverse communities local councils serve."

While serious action is necessary to redress this imbalance, it is not enough to aim merely at increasing the number of black managers at senior level. Two other issues are important. Essential criteria for all managers should include commitment to change and to improving the service to all marginalised communities, not merely in improving the personal professional development of managers. Ways also need to be found to enable minority communities to be actively involved in deciding how library resources are used and what services are provided.

Secondly, there should be organisational policies, structures and support mechanisms to enable black managers to implement change. LGMB recommends that any schemes to support black managers must be part of the mainstream and must not be seen as separate or marginal. In addition, LGMB says,

> Merely increasing the number of black and other minority ethnic managers in senior positions will not, by itself, improve organisational practices or services to the communities they serve. In development terms, black and other minority ethnic managers need to emphasise their capacity to transform their organisations. However, this must be matched by an organisational development framework which links service enhancement with employees' development. It must be clearly supported by senior management.

An essential ingredient for success of a programme to ensure that there are more black managers in local authorities was highlighted by LGMB.

> Without the leadership and commitment from the very top of their organisations black and other minority ethnic managers fear that measures taken to develop them will not create a fast track for development and career progression in local government.

Such commitment from top leadership has had success in other management development programmes run by LGMB, such as the Top Managers Programme and the Women's Leadership Programme. Similar Black Managers Programmes need to be initiated as a matter of urgency. The Quality Leaders Project takes this approach.

All authorities serious about redressing the imbalance in BME managers in senior positions need to study and implement the key findings from the research conducted by LGMB (1996, p.1). These include:

- Initiatives launched in the name of black and other minority ethnic managers should contain a fast track feature
- The participation of black managers in networking must be designed into any programme
- Finding supportive and appropriate mentors for black managers is the key factor in successful mentoring schemes.

The Survey's Recommendations (pp. 7-8, also LGMB, 1998b, pp.57-64) should be essential reading for all working in or interested in local authorities. They are grouped under 3 sections: recommendations for The LGMB, for local authorities, and for black Individuals. The ones for local authorities include:

- Chief executives of all councils should take personal responsibility for developing a strategy for management development and for securing its delivery, particularly in relation to the development of black and other minority ethnic managers.
- Authorities should monitor where BME staff are located in the hierarchy and how they are used.
- Authorities should systematically monitor the development and progress of BME managers during and after management development programmes.
- Authorities should develop programmes to ensure that the management structure more adequately reflects the diversity of the communities they serve, and to ensure that no groups are excluded.
- Authorities should develop and strengthen mentoring, political skills, project work, and networking schemes for BME managers.
- Development programmes aimed at BME managers must go beyond taking positive action to increase the number of managers at senior levels. Rather they should be aimed at accelerating the promotion of BEM managers in local government.
- Authorities should ensure that employee development is part of the performance review of senior managers.

Role of Officers with Equalities Responsibility

Equalities officers and other officers responsible for equal opportunities have specialist skills and knowledge that they can bring to the best value process. This includes knowledge and experience of working with and consulting different groups in the community and how to make services more responsive and accessible to them; knowledge of particular service needs of different groups and good contacts with voluntary groups.

Effective 'mainstreaming' of equalities should make it a day-to-day management responsibility. Officers with equalities responsibilities can play a number of roles:

- Ensure that at least one member of senior management has responsibilities and support to protect and promote equalities
- Make sure that equalities is a part of local priorities and objectives
- Work with service managers to help them put in place the service outcomes and performance measures that will deliver equalities. (LGMB, 1998c, p. 47).

Barriers to change – race & class connections

Changing hearts and minds

Change can come about only when structural barriers to change are removed. These include having an appropriate legislative framework, an appropriate staffing structure, management commitment to change, an adequate level of black leadership within the organisation, and an appropriate mechanism for black communities to influence policy and procedures of the service. Perhaps one of the most difficult change to achieve is the work environment. This is taken up by Johnson.

> *Thanks to the victories of the 1960s, America will never be the same. But the problems are more complicated now, and the solutions more evasive. Most institutional barriers to equality have been eliminated, but hearts and minds are harder to change than laws.*
>
> *I don't think we're proactive enough in terms of the problems and needs of others in our communities. Too often we leave it up to someone else to get things done. We all need to get involved, and we need to show that we're impatient with the way things are. And not kind of revert back to some old feelings and old attitudes that weren't good the first time around. -* Johnson, *Rafer,* The Best That I Can Be.

Contradiction between "democracy" and equality

The Government's drive towards greater devolvement and democracy is commendable in empowering communities. But there is a danger in the process of local empowerment coming into conflict with the Government's other drive towards equality. As Richard Thomas says, "Labour could soon be faced with the choice between a fairer, more equal society and a more open and democratic one." (Thomas, 1998). On the one hand is the need to direct greater resources to eliminate poverty and unemployment in some parts of the country and among some section of the community, including the black community. On the other, if the decision to transfer these resources is given to the affluent parts of the country or to the well-off people, then there is obviously a conflict which may well see equality sacrificed. The Government will have to resolve this conflict. "Let us hope, for the sake of the poor", says Thomas, "that he [Tony Blair] is not too democratic."

The problem at local authority level is equally acute, especially in situations where the Party in power is not able or interested enough to support equality at the expense of "democracy". The danger for the public libraries in this political set-up is real. In many cases it is politically expedient to give in to some white petty bourgeois groups which are extremely articulate in demanding - and getting - the lion's share of library resources at the expense of black communities, and working class as a whole. They are well connected to local or national political forces in power. Black communities and librarians have not yet established an equivalent power base. Leaders at every level need to put equality in the forefront of their agenda.

Black (2000) looks behind the public library's "sound, democratic façade" only to find "illiberal motives and the exclusion of the poor." He urges the public library movement to first acknowledge the "conservative foundations on which it has grown" and to "appreciate the strength of the middle-class pressure exerted on the public library over 150 years." It is this conservatism and middle-class pressure that defeated community librarianship and, at the same time, marginalised services to black communities. Any struggle for improvement in service to black communities will need to work closely with those struggling for information rights of the working people. Thus issues of race and class are very closely related, as recognised by the publishers of *Race and Class*.

Information revolution for a few?

Technological innovations have generally prompted the kind of economic and social leaps that have left the black community struggling. "Blacks have participated as equals in the technological world only as consumers," wrote Anthony Walton in the American magazine Atlantic Monthly earlier this month. "Otherwise [they exist] on the margins of the ethos that defines the nation, underrepresented as designers, innovators, and implementers of our systems and machines. As a group, they have suffered from something that can loosely be called technological illiteracy. (Younge, 2000).

Yet new technologies can also provide a powerful tool to eliminate racism for people of colour. Like any other tool, it needs to be used as a positive method of liberation. This needs new quality of positive leadership on the part of LIS managers who will need to work with black communities to open out the ICT potential to black communities and workers. As the National Black Caucus in USA says:

> The inventions of humankind are not the property of any one race to be used to gain artificial superiority. Technology can be as much an instrument of liberation as it is of domination. Liberators must gain control of these new technologies and employ them for the proper advancement of all humanity.
>
> (http://www.blink.org.uk/ . Accessed: 24 April, 2000).

DTI (2000) is thus a welcome initiative with its concern for the needs of black communities. If appropriately implemented, this can be a powerful tool to "include" black communities in the information revolution.

The need to fight institutionalised racism

We cannot wait for others to do things for us: we must accept the responsibility and take action ourselves.
- Ronnie Moodley (1999)

It is necessary to realise that people of colour are not passive recipients of racism. Wherever there is oppression and exploitation, there is resistance too. Resistance to oppression is a normal reaction among the oppressed.

> It is not only the issues of black library service that are ignored overall. The existence of *resistance to racism* in LIS field has also been similarly ignored by library educators and "mainstream" publications. It is true that in every work place where there is racism, there is inevitably resistance to it - however open or underground it may be. For those seeking proof of this, I would recommend a visit to any workplace where there are black information workers - but such resistance will become obvious only to those sympathetic to the cause.
>
> Again, it is in the interest of the those in power to ignore or play down the existence of such resistance. It is very seldom that one hears of resistance to racism in LIS. The resistance of black communities and librarians to institutionalised racism is hardly recognised, let alone being used as an example of how to combat racism. It is ironic that a profession devoted to free flow of information itself practices censorship of information and does it so efficiently. (Durrani, 1999b).

John (1995) explains how this resistance is then racialised:

> Our fundamental instinct is towards justice. Although the slaves knew that they would lose a limb if caught resisting, they continued to resist. Wherever there is oppression, there the oppressed will unite to resist. When black people resist, this resistance is racialised and seen as another reason to stereotype and marginalise black people.

Moodley highlights an important factor in eliminating racism: "This is the issue of changing attitudes, especially where the operation and organisation of the institutions are concerned. The need to achieve this is now urgent." (Moodley, 1999) This places the culture of resistance at the centre of tools needed to eliminate racism.

Gus John warns about the danger of side-stepping the issue of racism:

> There will always be problems when we side-step issues either to maintain consensus or to disenfranchise people. We ignore this [truth] at our peril. It is necessary to examine our attitude towards staff: how are staff valued, how seriously we deal with issues of marginalisation.

Struggle against racism is then the responsibility not only of people of colour but of everybody. In the LIS sector, it is particularly the responsibility of management to ensure that they not only create conditions for the elimination of racism, but take an active part in its elimination.

Using anti-racism to defeat anti-racism

There is a real danger that those opposed to fundamental change may use the term "institutional racism" to merely mouth formulas without doing anything about racism. The Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (2000) warns of two dangers:

> First, institutionalised racism has become a new buzzword. Wherever the term discrimination or racism would previously have been used, people now say "institutional racism." It is as though they think of it as some new politically-correct term that has now to be utilised, rather than a specific aspect of racism.
>
> Second, those agencies which assert that they are concerned about tackling institutional racism are not examining racism in new ways to find radical cures but merely resorting to old-style palliatives (reminiscent of 20 years of equal opportunities programmes).

PART 5: TOOLS FOR CHANGE

> **Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light not our darkness that frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be?**
>
> \- Nelson Mandela

Perspectives on combating racism

Ngugi (1993) provides a fundamental lesson on combating racism:

> Those fighting racism must never forget that racism, no matter how all-pervasive, is nevertheless an ideology founded on an economic system of exploitation and social oppression and today this is imperialist capitalism. Equally, they must never forget that its victims live its effects hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, all the year round on their bodies, in their bellies, in their minds, in their houses and in the streets. Racism is a psychological, cultural, political, and economic reality and not some disembodied abstraction.
>
> The economic, political, cultural and psychological empowerment of the social victims of racism as part of the overall struggle against the roots of racism is the only way of defeating it.

In the information field, much has been written about how to combat racism. What is missing is the practice of combating racism. Until the Government took on the matter of social exclusion, until Annual Library Plans became compulsory, until social exclusion came to be highlighted as having a poor record in the Plans, libraries were happy to do whatever little they could get away with.

In order to combat racism, one needs to see the problems from a number of perspectives:

- Historical imbalance.
- Black community point of view
- Organisation and the power of black staff in the LIS sector
- Responsibility of library management.

Solutions can be found only when there is an acceptance, especially among those who hold power, that there is a problem. Black communities know that they are excluded from "mainstream" life, that there is racism in Britain today, that nothing will change unless they actively struggle for change. But it needed the death of Stephen Lawrence, the communities' struggles and the pronouncements from a white judge to get a wider acceptance among the non-black community that we suffer from "institutional racism."

Singh (2000) makes clear what is required if we are to eliminate racism: "We need to have a clear national framework on how government intends to tackle institutional racism and it needs to set out clearly where ministerial accountability lies."

Roach and Morrison Recommendations

It is an indication of racism in LIS that the recommendations from a major research project on "ethnic diversity" have not been implemented in a systematic way. This is Roach and Morrison's (1998), *Public libraries, ethnic diversity and citizenship.* While one can find much debate and many courses on how to acquire new ICT skills and change service to address needs of new technologies, there seems to be total silence when it comes to changing the service to meet the needs of "ethnic diversity". The Library Association which prides itself on its "professional" training programmes sees little room for courses on Roach and Morrison's recommendations; in conjunction with ALCL, the London and Home Counties Branch organised an Executive Briefing in June 1999 on "*The significance of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry for Public libraries.* This was oversubscribed, indicating that there is a real need for such "Briefings". However, the London and Home Counties Branch no longer feels that it is necessary to organise a follow-up session. This is now being taken up by the Social Exclusion Action Planning Network which is fast emerging as a major engine of change in addressing the needs of the excluded communities.

No doubt, there are some individual authorities trying to implement the recommendations from the research, for example Enfield. Similarly there are other authorities such as Lancashire which are taking the CRE Standards seriously. Birmingham, Bradford and Merton have participated in the Quality Leaders Project. Similarly, some areas are proactively organising conferences to explore how services to black communities can be improved. Thus Shropshire Library Services organised a conference on the theme "Everybody welcome? The role of libraries in a socially inclusive society" in March 2000.

Yet the danger is that in trying to meet the recommendations of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report and in meeting the social exclusion requirements of the Annual Library Plans, the Roach and Morrison recommendations may be forgotten. They need to be seen as part of an overall response to improving service to black communities and to address the lack of employment opportunities for black LIS workers. There is a danger of wasting resources in reinventing the wheel when Roach and Morrison have already provided a well-researched tool to address needs of a "diverse" population. It is worth revisiting the recommendations from this major research project with a view to implementing them.

The CRE's Standards for Racial Equality

The Commission of Racial Equality, in its publication *Racial equality means quality* (CRE, 1995) "sets out the quality standards for local government in the pursuit of racial equality." The Standard aims to assist employers to develop racial equality strategies and to measure their impact.

The Racial Equality Standard sets up a common framework for the development of racial equality that can be used by all local authorities. It aims to bring racial equality into the mainstream of local government. The Standard is a mechanism for self-assessment and forward planning. The Standards are applicable in authorities with large as well as small ethnic minority populations.

Commitment, Action, Outcome

CRE emphasises three elements needed to ensure that equal opportunity policies are working: commitment, action and outcome. These are crucial elements in any racial equal opportunity policy but often tend to be ignored in practice.

The CRE Standards are a major programme to achieving race equality in action. Not only does it set out the legal, quality and other justifications for implementing the Standards, it also sets out tools to measure outcomes. There are five levels of achievements that represent progress on racial equality in five areas. While the Standard is defined at a corporate level, it needs to be applied at departmental level, in this case in Libraries. The five areas are:

- Policy & planning
- Service delivery and customer care
- Community development
- Employment (Recruitment & selection)
  Employment (Developing and retaining staff)
- Marketing and corporate image

Within each area are set out five levels of achievements and planning process should make it possible to facilitate planned progress to higher level of achievement.

The Lawrence Inquiry Recommendations

The Lawrence Inquiry (Macpherson Report) made 70 recommendations. Straw (2000) says, "We are getting on with implementing them all, not least with the Race Relations Amendment Bill which is now before Parliament."

One important achievement of the Macpherson report is to put "institutional racism" on the forum of social debate in Britain. Sivanandan (2000) sets out the importance of recognising "institutional racism":

> Institutional racism had never before been acknowledged by government or by official inquiry. In fact, Lord Scarman, appointed by the Thatcher government to look into the causes of the Brixton riots of 1981, had declared that there was no such thing as institutional racism, only personal prejudice, which "does manifest itself occasionally in the behaviour of a few police officers on the street". Personal prejudice is

> not a matter of central concern to black people. They are not bothered whether a particular white person likes them or not; that is the problem of the individual concerned. But when such prejudice is acted out in socially discriminatory ways so as to become racial discrimination, it does concern them that they cannot get their child into the school of their choice or that they cannot buy the house they can afford. And it is when such discrimination becomes embodied in the apparatuses of the state that racism becomes institutionalised.

Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (2000) warns against thinking that all problems will be solved now that the report has highlighted some weak areas: "The Macpherson report appeared to be a break with the past. But old ways are reasserting themselves." Mansfield (2000) expresses similar concerns:

> We have seen far too often Reports of Commissions that are left on back burner to evaporate into thin air...The concluding paragraph of the Report [46.42] stated the Panel's position as follows: "we hope and expect that the opportunity for radical thinking and root and branch action is seized. Nothing less will satisfy us, and all those who so passionately spoke to us." That opportunity, lamentably, has not been seized.

Each Library Authority needs to examine its own policies and practices in light of these recommendations. Local Government Association (1999) highlights the action needed on the part of local authorities to meet these recommendations:

- Produce a Written Commitment to Race Equality - This should outline action the authority will take to ensure that it provides an appropriate and professional service to black, Asian or other ethnic minority people, and meets its responsibilities under the Race Relations Act 1 976.
- Integrate Race Equality Principles into Service Delivery and the Best Value Process - Senior members, chief officers and service managers should examine their efforts to integrate racial equality and valuing cultural diversity principles into employment practices, Best Value reviews, service planning, service delivery, consultation and community development.
- Provide Effective Training - Training to prevent and challenge racial discrimination, harassment, prejudice and inappropriate behaviour is essential to transform a written commitment to racial equality into a reality.
- Adopt and Implement a Procedure for Dealing with Complaints of Racial Discrimination and Harassment - It is essential that local authorities have adequate complaints procedures which contribute to a fair and effective multiracial working environment, and ensure that employees can make a complaint of racial discrimination without fear of victimisation.
- Address the Under-Representation of black, Asian and ethnic minority people in the workforce - To deliver services that are appropriate to the needs of different communities, local authorities must aim to ensure that

their workforce represents the talents and abilities of the community being served at all levels.

- Publicise the Commitment to Racial Equality and Valuing Cultural Diversity - For a race equality policy to be effective the chief executive, senior managers and leading members need to acknowledge that racial discrimination and prejudice are likely to exist in their organisations, and champion the implementation of race equality policies to eliminate racism and discrimination and value cultural diversity.
- Evaluate Progress - Councils need to review the effectiveness of race equality policy development on a regular basis. Key corporate race equality performance indicators are grouped under "services" and "employment".

For local authorities to avoid the charge of institutional racism, workforces and committee structures should represent the talents and abilities of all sections of the community; quality services, sensitive to the needs of different communities or groups, should be provided; an effective consultation practices and working relationships with black and other minority ethnic communities should be in place. (Local Government Association,1999).

Action on these recommendations is limited and patchy as revealed by the analysis of the Annual Library Plans and results of the survey by the Public Library Policy and Social Exclusion. There is a danger that the Report may not be used to defeat racism, but at best to make minor, superficial changes, leaving the essence of racism in place. The Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (2000) points out the danger and what we should be doing:

> Those agencies which assert that they are concerned about tackling institutional racism are not examining racism in new ways to find radical cures but merely resorting to old-style palliatives (reminiscent of 20 years of equal opportunities programmes) increasing ethnic recruitment of staff and providing more culturally-appropriate service delivery.
>
> The idea of institutional racism is not being seen as a challenge to organisations to examine to examine their particular role, the context in which they work and the way in which racism has developed in their field. Instead a definition of institutional racism is being used as a kind of universal blueprint. What we should be examining is not what institutional racism is but what institutional racism does.

Sivanandan (2000) also looks at how the Report can be used creatively to combat racism:

> The point is not to look to Macpherson for a solution. It is enough that it has put institutional racism on the map and drawn attention to its prevalence in society. The challenge for such organisations, then, is to examine their particular roles, the context in which they work and the way in which racism has developed in their fields. Racism has become ingrained in different ways in different institutions - and has therefore to

be fought specifically, in terms of the specific policies, practices and procedures of a specific institution.

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- Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (2000)

The Government's Social Exclusion agenda

The Government defines social exclusion as shorthand term for "what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown".

The Social Exclusion Unit was set up by the Prime Minister in December 1997. Its remit is to help improve Government action to reduce social exclusion by producing 'joined up solutions to joined up problems.' "The Unit does not cover issues which are dealt with by one Government department only, or duplicate work being done elsewhere. It does devote time to participating in wider interdepartmental work that has a close bearing on social exclusion. *(Social Exclusion Unit Leaflet, 2000).*

There have been a number of initiatives in the LIS field which can be linked to the Government's overall agenda on social exclusion. While they do not address specifically race issues, they nevertheless apply to racial exclusion and can be powerful tools in addressing institutional racism in the LIS. The SEU's position on race is:

> In all our work, we have tried to mainstream the issue of race, where it is appropriate and the data exists for us to do so. The reports on "Truancy and School Exclusion", "Neighbourhood Renewal" and "Bridging the Gap" particularly cover minority ethnic communities. The Neighbourhood Renewal report gave rise to 18 separate Policy Action Team reports, each of which were requested to specifically cover the issue of race.[2]

This approach sets the lead for organisations to similarly "mainstream the issue of race". This is a commendable long term approach which is also recommended by *Libraries for All.* However, there is also a need to have a specific focus on combating racism in the short term as it has become so well embedded in British society. It is not possible to eliminate it by quietly mainstreaming action against it. A dual approach – immediate focus and long term mainstreaming – is necessary. Once the "historical imbalance" which black people suffer has been levelled out, mainstreaming can be a relevant strategy. It would appear that SEU may be addressing this concern as they expect to "publish a short guide to the ethnic minority aspects of the PAT reports as well as its other reports." This will be an important symbolic move to highlight the Government's concern that eliminating racism is a requirement, not an option which may or may not be followed. It will also reassure black communities that the Government is serious about its intention to eliminate racism.

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[2] David Reardon, SEU (personal communications), 5 May, 2000.

The Policy Action Team recommendations on race are likely to have an important impact on race issues in Britain. For example, SEU (2000) addresses the race issue in Annex B: *Ethnic minority social exclusion*. It examines "the disproportionate exclusion of ethnic minority people", and examines "What should be done about it?" It gives five areas of action:

- Tackling racial discrimination in the labour market;
- Involving people from ethnic minority communities more in the design and delivery of policies and services;
- Implementing targeted programmes;
- Tackling racist crimes; and
- Improving information about ethnic minority people.

PAT 15, (DTI, 2000) makes the following recommendation:

> In addressing the needs of poor neighbourhoods particular consideration needs to be given to black and minority ethnic groups. Local ICT champions and mentors should be drawn from the community they serve, and local provision should reflect the cultural background of the neighbourhood, for example by providing supported home loan of laptops in communities where women find using public facilities difficult.

PAT 15 also examines the ICT needs of black communities. It lists language needs and cultural differences as additional barriers that black communities face. It gives a number of examples of action taken by a few authorities to overcome these barriers.

Libraries for all

"One of the Government's highest priorities is to combat social exclusion" says Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport in the Foreword to "Libraries for All" (1999).

Black (2000a) explains the social significance of *Libraries for All*:

> …the institution (the public library in Britain) is hardly a bastion of social inclusion. Today, the majority of library users come from middle-class groups, yet these groups represent a much smaller proportion of the population. This has given rise to the latest attempt to render the British public library more inclusive – the DCMS's 'Libraries for all'

strategy. This strategy has been underpinned, moreover, by research on the interface between social exclusion and public libraries.

This is indeed a welcome document which is well researched and presented. It correctly identifies problems of great social significance and identifies the means of resolving them. It is refreshing to see the government taking a leading role that the profession and local authorities should have taken, but had not - partly out of inertia and lack of interest, partly as a result of the policies of the previous government. The positive points in the Policy Guidance need to be supported and developed further at local, professional and community levels. Action is long overdue and this document can provide a useful tool to address social exclusion in libraries. It needs to be sized by all authorities serious about addressing racism as well as other aspects of exclusion.

Some shortcomings and possible improvements to the draft Guidance were mentioned in Durrani, 1999c:

- There is no mention of who (in terms of class, race or other "excluded" categories of people) controls power in the library service - either at the level of elected councillors or of senior staff. Those who have power use it to reinforce the power of the social class or group they represent. They will go to any lengths to ensure their continued monopoly over the power they have. Exclusion cannot be eliminated unless the excluded have power to change the status quo. The report does not provide for a change of power relationship in the LIS. Thus all the good intentions will remain just that - intentions.
- The Policy Guidance are very good in terms of the universalities, but weak on particularities. Although this is a good approach for a guidance document, the experience of the "Equal Opportunity" shows that authorities can be very good in applying the "universalities" but when it comes to particularities, all sorts of institutional and personal problems creep in to negate the policy.
- It is therefore important for these Guidance to be more specific and spell out the minimum standards required. Thus different types of exclusion need to be identified: class, race, disability, sex and sexual orientation, etc. In each type, a minimum level of achievement needs to be recommended over a period of say 5 years. The decision as to whether the levels have been achieved should not be an internal one, but be linked to the Annual Library Planning process and be assessed by independent assessors who should include the communities and classes currently excluded.

Libraries: the essence of inclusion

Just before it wound down in March 2000, the Library and Information Commission published a Policy Document, *Libraries: the essence of inclusion*. It starts by stating the importance of "social exclusion":

> In order to enable individuals and communities to participate fully in the learning society and in the cultural, social and economic life of the United Kingdom, the issue of social exclusion needs to be addressed. Social exclusion is one of the Government's highest priorities and an area of utmost importance for the Library and Information Commission.
>
> Combating social exclusion involves understanding and working towards the elimination of the sources of exclusion. Reducing disparity, discrimination and disadvantage while recognising the value of diversity will enable individuals, communities and institutions to move toward a more inclusive society.

LIC thus provides an overall framework which enables libraries to play a central role in eliminating social exclusion. Although it does not talk of racism, it is implicit in the Policy Document. It sees libraries playing its part in eliminating racism. How this can be done is left to individual library authority to work out.

Library Standards

Library Standards can be a powerful tool to ensure improvement in service to black communities:

> The introduction of standards will enable DCMS to perform its function of 'superintending' public library services (as well as improving those services). Thus the draft standards document seems to concentrate more heavily on Performance Indicators than it does on standards. This is because there's no point in introducing standards without being able to check whether they're being achieved. With the arrival of Best Value, another powerful method of monitoring performance is available – inspection. (Stevenson, 1999).

Standards of service to black communities in terms of allocation of funds, outreach activities, specific information on rights, language translation services, and black managers need to be prescribed by Standards. Such performance indicators for black service should be included in the requirements.

Empowering staff

> **We are at the stage where there is a lot of positive declarations by captains – and others – of industry. What we are not doing anything about is actual delivery. You know – actual change on the ground, so that the employment profile of these organisations begins to reflect the communities in which they operate.**
>
> - Gurbux Singh (Travis, 2000)

Management responsibility

Given the situation that there are few black managers in decision-making positions in libraries, it is imperative that management devise ways of empowering black staff to influence policy decisions. This is a management issues as well as one that needs to be addressed by black librarians themselves. Management has the responsibility and the duty to address the effects of racism in work place and in service delivery. John (1995) poses a particular challenge to LIS managers in combating racism at work:

> The racialisation of oppression and immigration poses personal challenges at work for all. Managers need to ask themselves, "where do I stand? What constitutes sound judgement in this dynamic situation? What management culture exists and relates to racism. What conscious or sub-conscious notions of supremacy and of white cultural supremacy exists at work places. All products of creativity are steeped in cultural supremacy. What active leadership am I going to give on issues of race and to combat the culture of racism."
>
> In a situation where managers' actions are perceived as racist, how do managers react to the sense of racism that staff and users see in them? Do they dismiss it as "case of individual chip on shoulder"? or see it as a case of mass hysteria. Faced with the culture of racism, what support do I offer black managers. When Black staff's grievances are delayed, what action does the organisation as a whole take? What action do senior managers take against managers who see all black staff as collectively guilty?

The reluctance of library managers to change is seen as one of the reasons for the failure of a number of initiatives during 1970s and 80s. Muddiman (1999), for example, says: "According to Barugh and Woodhouse [3], the main reason for this failure is the institutional conservatism of library managers and staff, many of whom were tardy or unwilling to work with other agencies and most of whom struggled to redefine the universalist perception of the 'basic' book borrowing service."

The success of any policy in addressing the needs of black communities will ultimately depend on ensuring that library managers are made to change their mindset and actively provide a service that responds to the needs of the communities they serve. In addition,

- Library management must view diversity as top-down initiative that requires overhauls in the library's traditional culture.
- Library management must create an environment that reflects this commitment. The test of such an environment will be the library's ability to attract and retain managers who are dedicated to making diversity work. (Reese and Hawkins, 1999 p. 14).

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[3] Barugh, J and Woodhouse, R.G (1987), *Public libraries and organisations serving the unemployed* (British Library Research Paper 13). London:British Library.

John (1999) looks at the central role that management has to play in combating racism:

> Even before you begin to deal with issues of books and records and CDs and which newspapers you carry and all of those kinds of things, even before you begin to engage with that, [you need to address another issue]. Exclusivity, the exclusion, operates at a number of levels, not just in relation to how representative new titles on the shelf are. The messages that are given out to communities in terms of the way the place organises itself: the way those people coming in see black staff being treated, whether the Black staff have the ability to influence decisions about services in the same way that other people in other communities would consider it their right to do and know that they would be listened to when they exercise that right.

Black Workers Groups - Black Librarians with Attitude

One method of empowering black LIS workers is to allow the formation of Black Workers Groups. Experience in Hackney, Birmingham, and Tower Hamlets among other places shows that if allowed to work, such groups can have major impact in redressing imbalances in lack of black decision makers in LIS.

The problems of racism in the academic field in the USA were addressed by librarians by forming a support group for librarians of color:

> We have formed an informal support group called the BLWA - Black Librarians With Attitude. We meet on a regular basis - once a month at a restaurant during lunchtime - and we talk about our experiences on the job, issues that are important to us, and our concerns, plans, and hopes for the future. Because our university has an efficient office e-mail system, we often keep each other abreast of job opportunities, call to papers, research proposals and grants, staff development training sessions, upcoming conferences and meetings - anything that we feel may be of interest to each other. In spite of our differences, we respect each other, look out for one another, and support each other when needed. For want of a better way of putting it, we are our brother and sister's keeper. (Coleman, 2000).

With much evidence of the positive role that such groups can play in not only supporting black workers but in helping to eliminate racism in LIS, it remains a fact that few employers allow or encourage the formation of such groups. The reason seems to be a fear of the strength of a powerful force that can challenge the white positions of power. It is perhaps not accidental that those in power in the information field are against setting up of Black Workers Groups. A historical parallel to such thinking is provided by Black (2000) in examining the origins of the public library in Britain:

> ...the main reason why reformers wished to see an end to working-class drinking, or indeed, other kinds of irrational recreation and intellectual

> idleness (was) to prevent dangerous associations and the spread of radical ideas. Municipal libraries not only offered an alternative to the dangerous liaison of the public house. They acted as a counter-attraction to independent working-class libraries which were often located in public houses…it was hoped that the 'sober' literature found in free local libraries would entice workers away from pernicious 'socialist' literature...As W.J. Murison wrote: 'The provision of public libraries was…supported by the persons who saw in them a potential method of restraining their workers from reading books then regarded as revolutionary and harmful'.

Black Workers Group are perhaps seen as associations of oppressed people which would provide an avenue of sharing ideas and making plans for resisting racist and undemocratic work practices.

Challenging work practices

Most workplaces in Britain have work procedures, information systems, custom-and-practice that discriminate against black workers. This is obvious to those who suffer the negative effects of such unequal work practices. Yet few managers take steps to understand this factor, let alone attempt to eliminate it. It is not only black workers who suffer from such practices – white working class in LIS also suffer as a result of unfair practices. Again, this aspect has not been sufficiently addressed in literature or in practice.

The BBC way

> **Everyone in the BBC must own the need for change and squeeze out indifference or obstruction, ease in openness and accessibility - and make the BBC a welcoming home for people of varied cultures and backgrounds.**
>
> - Greg Dyke (2000)

The employment situation for black communities at the BBC World Service is no better than that in other work places. An inquiry by the CRE whose report the BBC is "attempting to suppress", allegedly raises damaging suspicions of racism in the World Service. Investigations by the Commission "uncovered evidence that staff from ethnic minorities were not promoted beyond junior grades, procedures to monitor ethnic minority representations were 'wholly inadequate', and there was 'widespread concern' among white and non-white staff about the situation. (Wells, 2000). Wells reports that a letter from National Union of Journalists outlines the evidence uncovered by the Commission:

- Ethnic minority staff stood in for colleagues at higher grades but were rarely promoted.
- There was a "bottleneck" of ethnic minority staff at low levels in the World Service newsrooms.
- Promotions …always went to white candidates.

It is thus timely that the new Director General, Greg Dyke is taking some welcome steps in order to bring about structural and cultural change in BBC. In this context, he has made ethnic diversity one of his top priorities. Libraries would advance by decades if they followed Dyke's example and adopted plans similar to the ones proposed for BBC. While it is too early to say whether these proposals will actually be implemented and whether there will be meaningful change, it is worth looking in some detail at the changes planned at BBC.

The need for change

Greg Dyke (2000) manages to capture the essence of the fast-changing society we live in and the urgent need for organisations to change in order to keep up with a rapidly changing world:

> We live in a fascinating, fast changing world in which the traditional institutions – in both the commercial and public sectors – are struggling to keep up with the enormous pace of change. Change which is driven by a number of factors which we all know well - technological, economic, cultural, societal.
>
> Organisations that were riding high only a few years ago are struggling because they failed to recognise the fundamental changes which are happening in our society. From Marks and Spencer right through to the Metropolitan Police you find institutions which have been slow to react to modern Britain and as a result have had problems.
>
> The BBC is no different. The BBC changed a lot in the '90s, but I would argue that the world has changed much faster and so we have to change more.
>
> The task during my time at the BBC is to make sure that we make public service broadcasting relevant to this new age – that's what my management re-organisation was all about on Monday, that's what the cultural change inside the BBC needs to be about. We need a new vision, and central to that vision is that the BBC must serve Britain's broad and diverse population.
>
> The great danger for any broadcaster is to let your audience get ahead of you in ideas and attitudes. And I believe that in the area of race there is real evidence that one important part of our audience - the young - are already well ahead of us. Many of you will know that better than me.
>
> For young people today British culture is already diverse and heterogeneous, multi-ethnic, multi-everything. For them multi-culturalism is not about political correctness but is simply a part of the furniture of their everyday lives.
>
> As you know all too well, in London and Birmingham it is estimated that

> within less than 15 years, Afro-Caribbean and Asian people will make up at least 40% of the youth population. I fear we, the media, don't understand the implications of that.
>
> A comprehensive piece of research on the young, undertaken by the BBC recently summed it up. It said: "Young Britain buzzes with the energy of multiculturalism. Yet most broadcast media does not reflect young multiculturalism."
>
> Our role is therefore to explore and articulate the meaning of Britishness in a multi-cultural devolving Britain.
>
> Any finally, the BBC has another reason for wanting to lead in this area - a moral duty almost. Every household pays our wages and funds our programmes through the privilege of the Licence Fee, and because of this we are charged with providing programmes and services for everyone and we are publicly accountable for doing so.
>
> Getting this right, reflecting in all our services the richness and diversity which is the reality of urban and young Britain today, will be a benchmark for my time at the BBC. Not because we are told to, or because we ought to, or even because we want to – and I genuinely do want to – but because in the end, if we don't we will fail to reflect the society in which we live and as a result we will increasingly become irrelevant and ignored.

What changes

A good understanding of the changing economic, social and cultural environment does not in itself translate into programmes for change. Dyke seems to understand this very well and has planned a major structural change to ensure that the new vision is delivered. Greg mentions a number of areas which are equally relevant to libraries:

> (1) Proportion of black people in employment
> (2) Proportion of black managers - Although we have met the 8% target for all our staff; in management roles that figure comes down to less than 2%. The top of the BBC is very white
> (3) Organisational culture - My concern is about the culture of the organisation – a culture that many from ethnic minorities do not find inviting, attractive or relevant. A culture that has still to recognise and fully understand multi-cultural Britain. A culture that is still rooted in another, earlier Britain.
> (4) Management responsibility - Change must start from the top and this will be one of the priorities I've set for myself and the new management team. I want to achieve a new target for the BBC overall: 10% by 2003 and to at least double the number of managers from diverse backgrounds [from current 2.5 to 4%] in the same time. We must recognise diversity as a central business objective - not just an HR component. It must be as much a part of core managerial accountability and competence as financial responsibility and creative

> leadership. And performance in this area will be judged through appraisal. This will apply to me, to my senior colleagues and to managers throughout

Libraries are in a similar danger of becoming irrelevant to the lives of people of Britain in the 21st century. We need to follow the lead given by Greg Dyke at the BBC.

Best Value
"Best Value is the framework for the future of planning and developing of local authority services. It provides the opportunity to establish race and equality priorities as part of corporate objectives, to set local performance indicators and targets for the achievement of those objectives and to ensure that race and equality issues are integrated into performance review and service planning. Best Value will also provide a new framework for competition and contracting." (Local Government Association,1999)

Under the Best Value process, there is a requirement for a fundamental performance review:

> The Government will require authorities to review fundamentally the performance of all their services over a five year period, making early inroads into areas of significant weakness... The principal outcome of each review will therefore be performance targets which take account of national requirements for the service(s) concerned - covering strategic objectives, costs and efficiency, effectiveness, quality and fair access, and an action plan demonstrating how these targets are to be achieved. (DETR,1998, 7.17-7.18).

Best value can be characterised as a nationally prescribed performance management system. Performance measures and performance indicators will be fundamental to the best value regime. (Local Government Management Board, 1*998c p.32*).

Best value is one way in which the government plans to modernise and transform local government. It proposes that Best Value will "deliver services to clear standards - covering both cost and quality by the most effective, economic and efficient means available. In carrying out this duty local authorities will be accountable to local people and have a responsibility to central government (DETR (1998) 7.1).

DETR White Papers do not indicate equality as an integral part of Best Value, but it is included as an aspect of Quality. As Local Government Management Board, (1998c, pp 4-5) states :

> Unless a service's definition of quality includes making it accessible to and appropriate for all members of the community, and contributes to equal opportunities and social inclusion, then the definition of quality is limited. Best value encourages councils to design, plan and deliver services which are sensitive to the diverse needs of all residents and

> citizens… Equalities - that is equal access to services, anti-discriminatory policies, diversity of services, equal opportunities in employment - all need to be built in from the start.

Past experience in the practice of equal opportunities would indicate that mere encouragement of policy is no guarantee that it will be implemented - if anything, it will most likely remain a paper policy. In order for real implementation of equal opportunity under Best Value, it is essential that the Best Value makes the actual achievement of equal opportunity in practice a legal requirement. In addition, the empowerment of minority ethnic staff and communities should also be a central requirement if Best Value is to deliver equality.

Best Value emphasises consultation with local people on service aims and standards. If carried out in the spirit in which this policy has been set by the Government, the " focus on consulting local people and more open and accountable council should (ideally) contribute to equality." (LGMB, 1998c, p.10).

The best value emphasis on involving the public, in order to be effective, has to be underpinned by a commitment to tackling social exclusion and disadvantage. (LGIU, 1998,p.4). The promotion of equal opportunities as a core principle underlying best value is emphasised by LGIU (1998,p.3). It helps to resolve contradictions in balancing needs of different interest and community groups in a number of ways:

- Help to protect the interests of disadvantaged communities that can otherwise get dismissed by bigger, more powerful or more vocal communities.
- Provide framework for resolving situations where there is a direct conflict between what might otherwise appear as two sets of equally legitimate interests.
- Provide framework for dealing with situations when a local authority may need to do something that may not be popular but still necessary.
- Avoid focusing only on visible consumer services that attract much public interest, and move towards an emphasis on the need to improve standards across the full range of services. (LGIU, 1998,p.3).

Equalities and Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators provide a base-line for planning, targeting and measuring change in service provision. Targets for improvements in take-up by particular groups can be set in local performance plans, then measured again as part of the next service review to see if take-up actually has increased over time.

Equalities indicators are a vital way of demonstrating whether services are reaching everyone. The indicator can show who is benefiting from services and who has access to them, providing essential information to local residents, officers and members. Such indicators provide an accurate picture of current service use by different sectors of the population. This enables libraries to see which groups are using the service and check the level of under-use of service among various sections of the local community. (Local Government Management Board, 1998c, pp. 33-34).

The Audit Commission introduced new Performance Indicators for collection in 1998/99, to be implemented in the near future. It requires each council to report whether they:

- publish a comprehensive equal opportunities policy
- monitor how the policy is carried out
- follow the CRE and EOC codes of practice on employment
- monitor employees with respect to equal opportunities
- indicate the level of the CRE Standard for Local Government they achieve in the provision of service to the community.

Equality and procurement strategy

Equality considerations need to be included as part of Library procurement strategy. Equality in service delivery and employment should be built into any tendering and contracting process. Councils should consider ways in which they can support local businesses or community organisations to enable them to successfully apply to become service providers.

Local Government Management Board (1998c, p.39) lists three ways in which equalities considerations should be incorporated in procurement strategy:

- what impact will the choice of the provider arrangement have on equalities;
- how do the different providers being considered meet equalities considerations e.g. their response to questions in relation to their performance under Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976.
- What requirements can be written into the service agreements, requiring the provider to meet all the obligations under Council's equalities policies.

Equality and employment issues

Equality should be considered as an important aspect of delivering a Best Value service. The workforce needs to reflect local and national ethnic make-up of the people if the staff are to deliver a relevant service. As Local Government Management Board (1998c, p.44) says, "A representative workforce is more likely to have the knowledge and skills to provide quality services which meet the needs of all the community." It is thus important to collect data on the equality profile of workforce, covering for example, proportion of ethnic minority staff, their grades, promotion history and prospects, and their training and work experience records.

LGMB (1998c) sets out what the requirements will be as part of the central activity of best value - Fundamental Performance Review (FPR).

> The Government will require all reviews to demonstrate that they have conducted their FPRs in a way that considers the 4 Cs - Challenge, Compare, Consult and Compete. All of these should include equality considerations... Equality action planning has become a key feature of performance management recently, and can contribute to performance review.

But Best Value does not stop at the above. There is an additional requirements to formulate and monitor local performance plans. The fundamental performance review will lead to the creation of new performance targets. "Local performance plans will need to reflect authorities' corporate objectives including those of sustainable development and equal opportunities" (DETR, 1998, 7.32). LGMB (1998c, p. 30) explains what needs to be included in the Local Performance Plans as far as equality is concerned:

> Each council will also need to select a few indicators that represent their local priorities and objectives. The choice and definition of local indicators is an area where equality considerations should be integrated. In addition, the following question will need to be asked. Are the equality targets in the plan:
>
> - comparable with what others achieve
> - challenging, i.e. produce real change - but measurable
> - relevant to your local circumstances and agreed objectives
> - measurable - you know whether you are achieving them
> - monitorable - it is realistic and cost-effective to collect the data
> - relate to the views and concerns expressed in consultation processes undertaken and, most importantly,
> - understandable and meaningful to local communities.

Aside from the content of the plan, and their coverage of equality issues within the community, it will be important to ensure that the distribution of the plans ensures that all communities are considered, in terms of language and media. Any published documents will need to be in clear English, translated and available in a number of formats. Some community groups may need assistance to make use of the information in the plan.

Quality Leaders Approach

The Quality Leaders Project for Black LIS Workers (QLP) is an initiative that addresses the dual problems of ensuring that library services provide value for the black community and equal employment opportunities, and it does so within a best value framework. The key propositions of this initiative are that the meeting of unrecognised or under-recognised needs requires new or enhanced services, and new and enhanced services require new skills and know-how (including new management know-how). (*Quality Leaders Project*, 2000).

The QLP approach was explained thus by the *Library Association Record:*

> Win a chance to improve services for the black community, with support. And gain some kudos as a pioneer of Best Value…The underlying aim is to put into action the now-classic 1998 Roach & Morrison report *Public Libraries, Ethnic Diversity and Citizenship*. The QLP works on the basis that projects are the best way to develop the know-how needed to improve the service, because solutions must be tailor-made to local needs. Projects could also be the way to develop much-needed managers and staff from ethnic minorities. (*Time to make a difference, 2000*).

The recommendations from the QLP should provide a new approach to meeting the needs of black communities and for developing new skills among black LIS workers.

LARRIE – Local Authorities Race Relations Information Exchange

One important barrier to combating racism is the difficulty of getting information about what progress is made in different parts of the country. Yet there is a useful service provided by LARRIE which needs to be used more widely.

LARRIE is a national charity established in 1984. It provides a comprehensive information service to local authorities and others on race equality policy development and service provision. The aim of the service is to assist local authorities to learn from and build on each others experience and facilitate the development of effective race equality policy and practice. The LARRIE database contains over 13,000 local authority committee reports on race equality issues, and provides information on modernising and employment issues, as well as on service provision. (*What's New, 17).*

It is the state that sets the tone and tenor of race relations in society. By refusing to examine and outlaw racism within its own structures – deportations, stop-and-search powers, death in custody, school exclusions – the state gives a filip to popular racism and contaminates civil society. The mind of the government can be seen in the Immigration & Asylum Bill – stigmatising the asylum seeker and dispersing them while the media churns out stereotypes. It is the racism of the state that needs to be addressed first.

- Dr. A. Sivanandan, Director, Institute of Race Relations, and Editor, *Race & Class (Jan/Feb 2000)*

PART 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

> **A lot of people have gone further than they thought they could because someone else thought they could**
> - Hackney Recruitment Partnership (2000 calendar)

Conclusion: Struggle against racial exclusion

Decades of efforts to eliminate racism from British society have brought about only marginal improvements. The root causes of racism have not been attacked. The social, economic and political conditions that give rise to and sustain racism have remained unchanged. In the meantime mechanisms to attack racism – Race Relations Units, Equal Opportunities, Equalities, Diversity – have played their part, but racism remains as powerful as ever.

In the library field, many attempts to address racism and exclusion have similarly failed. Gone are the days of community librarianship and Section 11 programmes. CRE's standards remain on local authority shelves to be dusted and brought out when there is a need to show that some action is being taken. Roach and Morrison's research recommendations are already being filed away without serious implementation. A year has passed since Macpherson's recommendations and only cosmetic changes have been seen to-date.

Meanwhile racism remains at the centre of British society. It is only the struggles of the people themselves that will eliminate racism. The black communities and black LIS workers will need to intensify their struggles. It is their efforts which in the end will eliminate racism.

This does not absolve library authorities and employers from taking action to eliminate racism in the workplace and in service delivery. The Government has given some lead in providing mechanisms that can help to combat racism. It promises to take action to see if these mechanisms are actually used and to monitor outcomes.

The responsibility lies initially with those at the top of the power base in local authorities and chief executives in all organisations. They need to give a clear message that racism is not acceptable. Their silence encourages racism to continue. It is then for the next levels of managers to ensure that policies and practices are examined and changed to ensure that there is a real change. It is only when the power-relations change that there will be any real change – when black communities can genuinely direct and influence use of resources and monitor outcomes that a start can be made. It is only when black LIS workers are empowered to influence policy and work- environment, when an adequate number from their ranks become policy makers at the highest levels, that we can talk of a possibility of change. It is only when those against change are made to take the path of change, that first steps towards eliminating racism can be taken.

It is only when the conditions which create racism are destroyed that racism will disappear. The following recommendations will help to speed up the process.

> **It is not enough to deal with racism at the individual level. Combating racism must entail a redistribution of social, economic and political power from the powerful to the powerless.**
>
> - World Council of Churches (1969) Quoted in *Goan Overseas Digest* 7(4)1999

Recommendations: A fight for the rights of the people

Vision of a new service

A partnership of black communities, black library workers, senior LIS managers and other stakeholders need to prepare a vision of a library service that is "at ease" with a society where diversity "is seen as an asset, not an issue or a problem; a [service] which is open to talent from all communities and all cultures; a service which reflects the world in which we live today not the world of yesterday," as Dyke (2000) saw for BBC.

Charter of Black Rights

The vision will not materialise into reality without legal enforcement. A Charter of Black Rights, based on basic tenets of the UN Human Rights Charter, with redress through courts of law, will remove the question of equality from the realm of desire and goodwill to a legal requirement. While the Charter will look at black rights in all fields, the information sector will need its own chapter to address specific issues in LIS. Information is power and control over information gives a position of power to those who control it. Regulation is necessary to ensure that the information is "equally" distributed in society based on people's needs.

Organisation should then pledge their commitment to the Charter of Black Rights.

National Race Council

A national body, possibly with a Ministry of Race Relations, is required to address race issues. This could be along the lines of the Race Council established in USA in 1998 - it is the "first free-standing White House office with a remit to educate the public about race, identify policies to increase equal opportunities, and co-ordinate work on race between the White House and federal agencies." (Brown,2000). New Labour has borrowed many practices from the USA. Perhaps the formation of a "Race Council" should be its next priority. In addition, the role and powers of CRE also needs to be urgently reviewed as per CRE's recommendations to the Macpherson Inquiry: "more power enabling CRE to conduct formal investigations, a new power enabling the CRE to secure legally enforceable agreements to end discrimination".

DCMS Black LIS Rights Agency

There is an urgent need for a nation-wide statutory body that ensures that policies in LIS respond to needs of black communities and that they are put into practice. Such a body should have power to ensure that libraries reflect the diversity of their communities at every level, particularly at senior, policy-making levels. The Agency should ensure that black issues are adequately dealt with in the Library Standards.

It is proposed that such an Agency should be under the umbrella of the Department of Culture, Media, Culture and Sports (DCMS) and should have representatives from black organisations and staff through the Black Workers Groups (see below). It should set policies and monitor progress in implementing Charter of Black Rights within LIS as well in Government policies and the work of other Government Departments, in the Civil Service, local authorities as well as in the private sector. It should oversee service to black communities from public libraries, schools, academic and institutional information services. Thus it will address the current divided service and ensure a joined up strategic approach.

The Agency should have the legal authority – possibly working with a more powerful CRE – to initiate legislation to enforce its policies.

Affirmative/positive action

There is a need to examine the possibility of having an affirmative/positive policy framework which ensures that over a period of time black representations in all fields reflects black proportion in the society. The legal basis of such action already exists in a recent ruling from the European Court of Justice in context of the situation of women:

> The European Court of Justice ruled yesterday that positive discrimination towards women in public-sector jobs does not breach law. The court said that equal treatment laws did not rule out priority for promotion of women in public-service sectors where they are under-represented.
>
> The judges were ruling in a German case about the right of Hesse regional authority to adopt an "advancement plan" for women. The plan specifies that at least half the post in the authority must go to women. (*Morning Star* March 29, 2000 p. 6).

Black Workers Group

It is essential that bworkers are allowed to have workplace and national Black Workers Groups so that they can articulate their concerns and make policy recommendations. This is particularly necessary until there is an adequate black presence in the policy-making levels of local authorities, Civil Service, Academic and other fields. The local LIS Workers Groups need to be sponsored by Chief Executives and the national body needs DCMS sponsorship and patronage. Without such high level support the Black Workers Groups face the danger of manipulation by local managers who can use divisive tactics to render such Groups ineffective.

Empowering Black communities

The Prime Minister has said, "Too much has been imposed from above, when experience shows that success depends on communities themselves having the power and taking the responsibility to make things better". (Tony Blair, PM in Foreword to *Bringing Britain Together,* 1998, p.7).

Best Value mechanism as well as Library Standards need to ensure that there is a meaningful involvement of black communities in library service policy and practice. Halpin's recommendations need to be taken seriously and implemented:

> A number of elements are required to deliver full and inclusive representation. You have to be *part of the debate, part of policy making and part of implementation and development of policy*. (Halpin, 2000, 10).

Possible tools

There are a number of tools already available for improving service to black communities. They can be effective agents for change provided there is commitment to change. Library Standards and, Best Value have already been mentioned. Others include:

- Patrick and Morrison, M (1998), *Public libraries, ethnic diversity and citizenship*
- Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), 1998 *A standard for racial equality for local government;*
- *Stephen Lawrence Inquiry: Report of an inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny* (1999).
- Recommendations from Public Library Policy & Social Exclusion Project
- Annual Library Plan requirements, especially on Social Exclusion.
- *Libraries for All: Social Inclusion in Public Libraries; Policy Guidance for Local Authorities in England* (1999)
- Recommendations on race from the Policy Action Teams (PATs)

It is also important to work in co-operation with other authorities and employers so that there is not only an exchange of ideas and good practice, but also joint action and training to solve similar problems. The Social Exclusion Action Planning Network provides an ideal body for this.

Management responsibility

Library management must create an environment that reflects commitment to change so that black communities and workers receive fair and "equal" service. The test of such an environment will be the library's ability to attract and retain managers who are dedicated to making diversity work. (Reese and Hawkins, 1999 p. 14). As a librarian in the Case Studies (1999) says, tax-payers' money is wasted if authorities "retaining racist and incompetent managers".

The Library Association

In terms of professional organisation, the American Library Association is decades ahead of the British Library Association in supporting the needs of black workers and communities. ALA uses its Office for Literacy and Outreach Services to "ensure that the ethnic caucuses of the ALA are supported in their effort to ensure that the issues and concerns of ethnic minority library professionals and ethnic minority populations are properly addressed" (Reese and Hawkins, 1999). It is time for the British Library Association to make itself relevant to the needs of British people in the 21st century. In not addressing the needs of black communities and workers, the Association is doing a disservice to white as well as black communities.

Responding to a multi-cultural Britain

The LIS world needs to address issues taken up by Dyke (2000) for the BBC:

- Proportion of black people in employment
- Proportion of black managers
- Organisational culture
- Management responsibility

In addition, appropriate climate for improving services to black communities will need to be created. The following issues will then be addressed in a positive climate of change:

- Appropriate staffing structure
- Relevant staff training
- Provision of adequate funding for services to black communities
- A real commitment to improve service to Black communities, especially from Members, Directors and senior library managers
- Empowerment of black communities and staff.

Research support and funding

It is important that research into needs of black communities and in employment issues is carried out so as to provide appropriate solutions within the Best Value framework. The Library and Information Commission-funded Quality Leaders Project for Black LIS Workers enabled Merton Library and Heritage Services and Association of London Chief Librarians (ALCL) to involve the Business School of the University of North London to carry out a feasibility study for the Project. The next stages of the Project will thus have a greater chance of success and sustainability. It is important that Re:source (as MLAC has now been re-named) continues to support such initiatives. Similarly DCMS and Home Office funding for research and implementation of such projects will prove essential for there to be any meaningful change in library and information services to black communities.

A matter of rights

In the final analysis, elimination of racism is a matter of human rights. It is a question of removing the differential of power that divides black communities and workers from white communities and workers. John hits the correct tone when he says:

> … by identifying wrongs we will give more opportunity to focus on rights. The business at the end of the day is about the protection, the safeguarding and the advancement of rights. Rights that are routinely denied because of racism. Rights that are routinely denied because of the historically received wisdoms that people have about themselves and the way they fear to question where their own power and authority actually comes from. If we are concerned about rights, then we have a responsibility to interrogate our practices and to challenge our structures and to do so without fear of being victimised because we're exercising those rights. (John, 1999).

The struggle against racial exclusion should be waged in every workplace, every policy forum, every community meeting, every library shelf. It is a struggle not only for those excluded, but also for those who benefit, knowingly or unknowingly, from the exclusion of some people, some communities, some countries. Just as slavery is unacceptable to us today, so should racism and all the exploitation and social oppression that goes under its name. The challenge to eliminate racism is for each one of us.

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

- Martin Luther King, Jr. (1963) – letter from prison, "The Negro is your brother".

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